



A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR LIVING THE SFO RULE IN A MORE EFFECTIVE WAY

by Attilio Galimberti, SFO – Milano, Italy



FROM THE SFO RULE — ARTICLE 14: ...Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will are called to build a more fraternal and evangelic world... Article 15: ...be in the forefront in promoting justice by testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.

WORKING WITH FRANCISCANS INTERNATIONAL AT THE UNITED NATIONS FOR PEACE, JUSTICE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION.

Franciscans International (FI) and members of the Franciscan Family (FF) around the world are using the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the United Nations (UN) to advocate on the challenges and injustices faced by the poor. During a four-year cycle, this process examines the level of respect for and implementation of human rights in each of the States as they come up for review. Recommendations on specific concerns can be made to the respective governing bodies to effect positive change.

FI works with Franciscans to collect principal facts regarding the human rights situation in the State concerned, to voice any concerns during the Human Rights Council (HRC) at the UN, and to ensure accepted recommendations are fulfilled within a respected time. All 192 UN member States are reviewed no matter what their social, economical or political status. Canada began its review in February 2009, Italy started in February 2010 and North America in November 2010. All Franciscans can play a collaborative role in all parts of the UPR process.

Italian SFO, Attilio Galimberti, from Italy, is currently working with FI and Franciscan brothers and Sisters on the UPR for Italy. He says: “Particularly for SFO members, as recalled in this article’s foreword, being engaged in the UPR process is an additional opportunity to concretely live the form of life that the Rule asks us to live.” The engagement for the Franciscans can start from phase 1 with a direct participation in the preparation of the reports with the submission, in collaboration with Franciscans International, of its own report on specific human rights situations that need to be addressed. This can be further collaborated on with other members of the FF and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) to give it more weight and credibility.

With the help of FI, this report is drafted and edited to meet UN standards and formally submitted to the UN Office of the High Commissioner. Even before phase 2, FI begins lobbying the States of the Working group, to raise their awareness of the issues of concern so that the State delegations can prepare to ask questions and make recommendations during the HRC session. During this time, Franciscans can circulate the report through the Family and parishes and to the local, regional and national authorities, institutions and media. Due to FI holding General Consultative Status at the UN, as part of the third phase it is possible for Franciscan representatives from the State under review to attend a HRC session to officially and publicly make an oral declaration.

“Having been personally involved in this process, I can confirm that the preparation of the report has been a very demanding challenge that allowed me to strengthen fraternal relationships with other members of the FF and to have a more clear and exhaustive picture of the human rights situation here in Italy,” continues Attilio, a member of Romans 6, the JPIC Interfranciscan Commission, and coordinator of the CIOFS Commission Presence in the World.





But the most important gift I had from this participation came to me on the day I was in the UN Council Room in Geneva, waiting for our allotted time of two minutes to read to the HRC members our Formal Statement on the issues of concern, identified by the FF in Italy. The room is huge with delegations from all over the world all listening to you. Just realizing this and entering the room causes your emotions and pulse rate to soar.

I saw the beauty of the people from around the world and how the universal fraternity that Francis understood and preached is real and true. I have always been aware of the importance of FI and of its mission at the UN, but while sitting there I also realized that this presence is another very important form of missionary testimony, this time not at grassroots level but before the States of the world.

I fully understand the joint role FI and the Franciscan Family plays today at the UN. It is very close to the one Francis played in Damietta when he met the Sultan and this is the hidden but added value that we, as Franciscans, have and should preserve.

A significant role can be played by Franciscans as well as civil society, during phase four – the follow-up of the UPR. All energy should be invested in bringing about concrete changes to improve the enjoyment of human rights in the country. We can all consider taking the following actions as part of the follow-up:

Raise awareness about the results of the UPR process through the media, a conference, a round table discussion, and with family, friends, parishes and organisations.

Run a campaign or engage in symbolic actions or initiatives in order to push for faster implementation of the recommendations accepted by the State.

Engage in a dialogue with authorities on ways to implement the accepted recommendations and encourage them to work on those that were not accepted.

Encourage the State to put into action a mechanism of follow-up on the implementation of accepted recommendations.

Evaluate the work done following the UPR on a yearly basis.

Participate in the next UPR of your country.

The FI International Board of Directors, for all the reasons and opportunities mentioned, decided to officially adopt the UPR as a main UN mechanism to work with. It offers one of the best and most comprehensive tools for FI and Franciscans to advocate on the challenges and injustices faced by the FF and the poor. It is a unique advocacy opportunity that allows Human Rights challenges faced on the ground to be raised at the international platform.

Franciscans have an important role in promoting this work among the Family and participating in the UPR process.

For the members of the Franciscan family who are daily on the side of those who suffer, are forgotten and whose human dignity is overlooked, it is an opportunity, following the example of Francis and Clare, to be beside the most vulnerable and demand their Human Rights be respected and enjoyed.

May the Lord give you his peace.

To read the formal statement made by Attilio Galimberti during the UPR for Italy on June 9, 2010 and the Oral Declaration for the Adoption of the UPR Report of Canada visit:

www.franciscansinternational.org/statementspage



Contact Franciscans International if you are interested in working together on the UPR of your country. To see the UPR calendar of states currently and coming up for review visit:

www.upr-info.org/IMG/pdf/uprlist.pdf



For more details about Franciscans International visit:

www.franciscansinternational.org

