Statement Bonaire Human Rights Organization

TUESDAY 22 APRIL 2026

THE EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Statement James Finies, Vice-President Bonaire Human Rights Organization

10:00 – 11:30 (i) Artificial intelligence, cultural rights, and the right to development

Thank you, Chair.

We are from the Bonaire Human Rights Organization, and we wish to draw attention to the right to development of Bonaire as a non-self-governing people in substance.

We remain excluded from full and effective participation in determining our own development trajectory. Despite being incorporated into the constitutional structure of the Netherlands in 2010, the people of Bonaire continue to experience structural inequality in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

The right to development, as affirmed in the Declaration on the Right to Development, requires free, active and meaningful participation of peoples in development processes. However, in Bonaire, decisions affecting education, language policy, economic priorities, and demographic transformation are not being shaped by the freely expressed will of the people.

We highlight in particular the erosion of cultural identity and language, the growing demographic imbalance of the native population, and the lack of equal protection and implementation of international human rights standards.

These realities raise serious concerns under international law, including implications under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Development cannot be imposed. It must be people-centered, rights-based, and grounded in self-determination.

We therefore call on this Mechanism and Member States to recognize that non-self-governing conditions, whether formal or de facto, remain a barrier to the realization of the right to development.

I have two questions for the panel.

How does the Expert Mechanism assess situations where peoples such as Bonaire are formally integrated within a State, but do not enjoy the same effective possibilities to determine their own development future?

And secondly, what support mechanisms can be recommended for peoples in such situations to ensure that the right to development can be genuinely exercised?

Thank you.