Statement Bonaire Human Rights Organization

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL 2026 afternoon session

THE EXPERT MECHANISM ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT THIRTEENTH SESSION, 21–23 APRIL 2026

PROGRAMME OF WORK

Item 4 (cont'd) Implementation of the mandate and programme of work

16:30 – 18:00 (ii) Advancing non-discrimination, equality and development for all: 40 years of the right to development and 25 years of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action Presented by I. Durant

Intervention – James Finies Vice-President Bonaire Human Rights Perspective

Chair, Distinguished Experts,

We value and recognize the contributions from all experts—and in our particular case, these contributions carry added weight.

Because the realities we raise today are not theoretical; they reflect ongoing conditions experienced by peoples who remain structurally outside full participation in development.

We align with the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, and the commitment to leave no one behind under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

However, we observe a critical gap.

The right to development framework is still largely post-colonial in application, focusing on States that have completed decolonization. This leaves territories such as Bonaire—still in non-self-governing or unresolved political conditions—insufficiently addressed.

If we aspire to leave no one behind, we must recognize those such as us who remain structurally excluded from determining their own development.

As noted by the Expert Mechanism, development must be human-centred, ensuring equitable participation and fair distribution of benefits. Yet for territories without full decision-making authority, participation is inherently limited.

In this context, non-discrimination must go beyond equality within States. It must also address inequalities between territories and administering powers—including disparities in governance, resources, and cultural protection.

For Bonaire, this is reflected in limited influence over development policies and ongoing pressures on cultural identity and socio-economic balance.

We therefore call for a necessary shift:

To explicitly integrate listed and not listed non-self-governing territories into the right to development framework—

Recognizing them as distinct rights-holders,

And ensuring their meaningful participation in decisions that shape their future.

Only then can the principle of leave no one behind be truly realized.

Two Questions

1. How can the Right to Development, the DDPA and the principle of leave no one behind be operationalized to address structural exclusion in listed and not listed non-self-governing territories?

2. What mechanisms can ensure meaningful participation for territories like Bonaire in development decisions, despite limited political autonomy?

Thank you.