**Statement Bonaire Human Rights Organization**

**THURSDAY 23 APRIL 2026**

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

PROGRAMME OF WORK

(b) Focused thematic discussions

10:00 – 13:00 (iii) An interactive chapter-by-chapter discussion on the draft international covenant on the right to development - Presented by M. Kanade

Bonaire Human Rights Organization – 23 April 2026

Statement and questions by: James Finies Vice-President Bonaire Human Rights Organization

Chair, Distinguished Experts,

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

Because they speak directly to realities that are not post-colonial, but ongoing.

We align with the Declaration on the Right to Development and the commitment to leave no one behind. Yet, for non-self-governing territories such as Bonaire, this principle remains only partially realized.

Much of the global development framework assumes that decolonization is complete. However, the draft covenant itself clearly recognizes that colonialism, foreign domination, and the denial of self-determination remain obstacles to development.

For Bonaire, development is not only about socio-economic progress—it is fundamentally linked to political status, self-determination, and equal participation.

The covenant affirms that:

All peoples have the right to freely determine their political status and pursue development;

And that administering States have obligations toward Non-Self-Governing Territories to uphold these rights.

Yet in practice, territories like Bonaire experience:

Limited influence over development policies;

Structural inequalities in governance and resource control;

And pressures on cultural identity, language, and demographic balance.

This raises a fundamental concern:

If peoples cannot fully participate in determining their development path, can the right to development truly be realized?

To genuinely leave no one behind, the international community must move beyond a purely State-centric and post-colonial framework and explicitly address territories still living under unresolved colonial arrangements.

We therefore call for and recommends:

Recognition of non-listed and listed non-self-governing territories as distinct rights-holders;

Integration of self-determination into development policy frameworks;

And mechanisms ensuring their direct and meaningful participation in international decision-making processes.

Without this, structural exclusion will persist.

Two Questions to the Expert Mechanism

1. On Operationalization for listed and not listed Non-Self-Governing Territories

How will the Expert Mechanism ensure that the right to development is effectively operationalized for listed and non listed non-self-governing territories, where the realization of development is directly constrained by unresolved political status and limited self-determination?

2. On “Leave No One Behind” and Participation

What concrete mechanisms can be established to ensure that peoples of territories like Bonaire can exercise active, free, and meaningful participation, as required under the draft covenant, in shaping development policies that affect their future?

Thank you.