

**Statement of the Secular Franciscan Order of Sardinia and Franciscans International
For the Pre-Session of the 4th Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review of Italy.**

November 22, 2024,
Geneva, Palais des Nations,

Introduction

Your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

I am Sr Charity Nkandu, a Franciscan Sister representing Franciscans International and for the purposes of this meeting the Secular Franciscan Order of Sardinia. I was personally present for the workshop organised by Franciscans International in Assisi from 17-19 April this year when human rights concerns which Franciscans have in respect of Italy were discussed for the purpose of making a submission under the UPR process. This meeting attracted religious brothers and sisters who work with migrants as well as both religious and lay people concerned with the integrity of the environment and the protection of the rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

As a result a joint submission was made for Italy's UPR in 2025.

Key human rights issues

This presentation will focus on the right to health and the right to a clean healthy and sustainable environment.

1. The right to health

Article 32 of the Italian Constitution recognises the right to health as a fundamental right of each individual and of the community, guaranteeing free treatment to the indigent. The right to health is, therefore, an inviolable and absolute individual right of importance for the entire community. Italy has adopted relevant legislation, regulations, and other measures to fulfil the constitutional mandate.

The overall context for this is of course spending on health in Italy. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) statistics for 2022 show that Italy's health spending was 6.8% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thirteen European countries spend more than this with a gap of 4.1% in respect of Germany down to 0.3% in respect of Iceland. The independent health observer GIMBE (*Gruppo Italiano di Medicina Basata sulle Evidenze*) in its sixth report presented in the Senate of the Republic in Rome on 10th October 2023¹ gives, with the Ministry of Health of Italy, the most current accurate statistics as regards the Italian National Health Service. In its reports it has monitored the state of compliance with the essential levels of care and noted the deep inequalities between the northern and southern Italian regions –which include the islands of Sardinia and Sicily.

¹ 6° rapporto GIMBE sul Servizio Sanitario Nazionale

During the 3rd UPR cycle, Italy accepted the recommendation to : “Implement necessary measures to limit regional disparities in accessing health care, including for migrants.” However, regional disparities seem to have increased rather than decreased. We recommend the Government of Italy to:

1. Take concrete measures to redress the inequitable distribution of health services between the regions
2. Ensure accessibility to health services in all regions, particularly peripheral and disadvantaged areas.
3. Increase health spending to bring it in line with the OECD average.

Since then however the situation has worsened, as shown by the 7th Report of GIMBE² which was published last month which show a shortfall of some 19 billion euros between the measures envisaged and the healthcare funds available; a projected fall of public spending to an all-time low of 5.9% GDP by 2027 compared to the 2022 figure of 6.8% and what GIMBE describe as a true and proper “structural fracture” between north and south.

2. The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

In July 2022, the United Nations welcomed the recognition by the General Assembly of the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. This is recognised in the Italian Constitution under the combination of Articles, 9, 32 and 117. Healthy forestry is vital to providing a healthy biodiversity and ecosystem which is a substantive element of the right to a healthy environment. This is also recognised by Italian law by which the national forest heritage as part of the national natural capital and as a significant asset, which is in the public interest to be protected and enhanced for stability and well-being of present and future generations.

However, in practice this is not being adhered to as we can see from the following statistics:

- 90% of the forested areas in Italy are either managed in an unsustainable way or not managed at all.³
- 75% of the wood produced by the forest remains there although Italy is the second highest importer of wood for burning in the world.⁴
- Forest fires nine times more likely due to state of mismanagement.⁵

We are therefore calling for action in an area which has not had much attention, not having had recommendations in the past UPR cycles.

We recommend the Government of Italy to:

² 7° rapporto GIMBE sul Servizio Sanitario Nazionale 8 October 2024

³ Data from National Forestry inventory – there is 1,003,503 ha certified as sustainable of 11,054,458 ha covered by forest. See <https://sinfor.sian.it/#/reportistica>

⁴ Source: National Forestry Inventory (Inventario Forestale Nazionale)

⁵ <https://www.pefc.it/news/incendi-boschivi-modalita-e-strategie-per-darci-un-taglio>

1. Adopt a national action plan on sustainable forestry management to deal with the issues of abandonment of mountain territories; loss of old forest; use of the wood available; and fixing of carbon dioxide levels to ensure that Italian citizens enjoy a clean healthy and sustainable environment.
2. Provide necessary resources to implement this sustainable forestry management plan with the technical capacities needed, beginning with forestry under State or local control.

Thank you.

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