



STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE SYNOD ON THE AMAZON

“We, the indigenous people of Guaviare (Colombia), are part of nature because we are water, air, earth and life of the environment created by God. Therefore, we ask that the mistreatment and extermination of ‘Mother Earth’ cease. The earth has blood and is bleeding, the multinationals have cut the veins of our ‘Mother Earth’. We want our indigenous cry to be heard by the whole world” ([Instrumentum Laboris](#) 17).

With joy we have received *Instrumentum Laboris for the Amazon: New Paths for the Church and for Integral Ecology*, the working document for the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazonian Region to be held in October 2019 in Rome. We recognize that this key document reflects the challenges faced by indigenous peoples. Through their understanding of integral ecology, they have defended their territories against the threats and the negative and degrading effects of the activities conducted by extractive industry in their territories.

Importantly, *Instrumentum Laboris* recognizes the need to strengthen dialogue with the indigenous population. For this reason, we support the process of the Synod, including the working document, as well as the post-Synod process. This process reflects the *Kairos* spirit of this key moment of change, which will benefit those indigenous communities which Pax Christi International has been accompanying, with its member and partners.

The history of violence in the Pan-Amazon region is far-reaching: from colonization and slavery, to the economic violence we see today that treats people and Earth as disposable. As reflected in the working document, this violence in the Amazon is driven by extractive industries such as illegal and legal logging and mining. These activities cause harm that includes forced displacement, human trafficking, migration, climate change, social inequities, poverty and socio-cultural destruction.

We are also concerned about political and institutional violence, socio-environmental conflicts, the criminalization of social protest and the threat and assassinations of defenders of human and environmental rights, which have been denounced through our advocacy work.

At the same time, the indigenous communities that inhabit this region have taken care of Mother Earth for centuries and have incorporated, within the concept of “Good Living” (or *Buen Vivir*), the practice of active nonviolence as a way of life and an essential characteristic for change in the historical paradigm. Pope Francis alluded to this in Puerto Maldonado, Peru and it is affirmed in the working document. This approach opposes a concept of “development” which attacks the environment and the communities that inhabit this region.

We ask the Vatican, the global, and the local church to consider the following:

- Listen during the Synod and post-Synod processes to the voices of indigenous peoples calling out for the preservation of the ecosystem that nurtures and protects current and

future generations, including the voices of women through a meaningful, permanent practice of continuous interactive participation, especially related to rights of the indigenous peoples and farmers and the protection of Mother Earth.

- Ensure that the prior consultation process by REPAM (Pan-Amazonian Ecclesial Network) meets the expectations of the Amazonian populations. This requires an effective Synodality, in which the balance between centralized and decentralized ecclesial structures is strengthened.
- While *Instrumentum Laboris* makes an explicit reference to ILO Convention 169 on the rights of indigenous peoples to Free, Prior and Informed Consultation, it is necessary to insist that such consultation must be done in the native indigenous language. Follow-up to these processes must be provided through legal assistance and other actions that guarantee respect for indigenous rights. Education on these rights is necessary and must include specific recommendations on the right to information, consultation and consent, to the population in general and especially to lawyers, judges, police, political authorities and government officials at all levels.
- We welcome that the issue of the criminalization of protest and the defence of territories is clearly mentioned. Indigenous peoples are very vulnerable, given the precariousness of legal instruments and access to justice for them.
- Avoid losing, during the Synod and post-Synod processes, the focus on the Amazon and its particularities. At the same time, analyse the global implications in other regions that need to be included as well. Establish the right balance between the best ways to help from the North. This includes to change a culture of consumption at an individual and institutional level through policy change.
- During and after the Synod, the Church must rethink the techno-economic paradigm (*LS Ch.3*), issues such as the "decarbonization" of the economy, the disinvestment of funds that accentuate climate chaos and unbridled extractivism, and the promotion of investments and projects beneficial to the environment and the people. The option of ecologically responsible production and conscious consumption should lead to the implementation, in each territory, of an agro-ecological, fair trade, culturally viable project, supported by an ethical bank.
- The Synod Church and the Post-Synodal process must support those initiatives that promote a new economic model inspired by the Integral Ecology of *Laudato Si'*, an alternative, ecological, circular, social, supportive, and prophetic economy, so that the 'Good Living' - mentioned in *Instrumentum Laboris* as an integral notion of indigenous peoples – should be the goal for all human community, as a premise for the survival of humanity and the planet.
- When referring to the world view of indigenous peoples and the way they see development, we consider it important to mention that this perspective be taken into account in development policy debates at all levels.
- Join indigenous peoples in their efforts against institutionalised violence to Mother Earth by supporting the implementation of laws that enhance the protection and care for Mother Earth, including for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- It is important that in the work of the Synod, an explicit reference be made to the role that the Vatican can play in the advancement of international instruments on Business and Human Rights, such as the new UN treaty on Business and Human Rights, currently under negotiation in Geneva. The conclusion of a binding legal treaty would be a solid and

immense support for the indigenous communities and for the work of civil society pushing governments and companies to contribute to the promotion and respect of human rights.

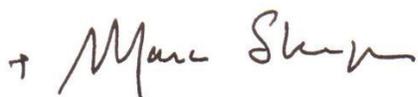
- When referring to water in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, it is imperative to emphasize the importance of water for life and that the Church, through its activities, must reinforce that water is the source of life in all Creation and for all of us.
- Likewise, it is imperative that *Instrumentum Laboris* alludes to contamination from mercury and other toxic elements. The document should also reference the Minamata Convention, which restricts and prohibits the use of mercury in the mining industry. It is also necessary to continue advocating for the ratification of the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (or Escazú Agreement).
- We agree that Integral Ecology, promoted in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* and emphasized in *Instrumentum Laboris*, should be included centrally in curricula, not only in indigenous education, but in an inclusive manner in all curricula.
- It would be important, after the enactment of *Instrumentum Laboris*, to shed light on what the follow-up to the Synod will be, how to encourage the whole world to respond to this key message and provide long-term support to the indigenous peoples.

Pax Christi International, through its distinctive approach working with members and partners in Latin America, some of whom accompany communities in the territories of the Amazon, will continue to support indigenous communities resisting extractive projects, as well as to advocate that the communities most affected by extractive activities in Latin America and their problems be a priority in the human rights, trade and cooperation agendas of the international community.

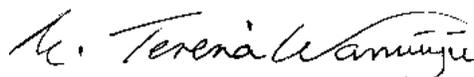
It fills us with hope that the Synod will be an opportunity to advance - from the territorial reality as a spatial and spiritual identity, in the understanding and commitment of the Universal Church - the principles of active nonviolence. We hope that the Synod will be an opportunity to continue the path of our understanding of Integral Peace, related to Integral Ecology promoted by *Laudato Si'*. In addition to the ethical principles of the 'Common Good' and "Inter-generational Justice," carries an inherent spirituality expressed in an integral conversion and a culture of caring for building a just and lasting peace.

Pax Christi International, together with its members and partners, has an immense gratitude for Pope Francis his leadership on the Synod, his trust in REPAM, and we hope that the Church, the international community and the entire society will support the Synod messages and contribute to post-Synod processes in a determined and active way.

On behalf of Pax Christi International,



Bishop Marc Stenger
Bishop of Troyes, France
Co-President Pax Christi International



Sr Teresia Wamuyu Wachira (IBVM)
Kenya
Co-President of Pax Christi International

With support of the following members and partners:

- Pax Christi Italy
- Pax Christi United Kingdom
- Pax Christi Germany
- Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, United States
- Missionary Society of St. Columban, United States
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- SOS Environmental Corporation, the legal entity of the Environmental Committee in Defense of Life, Colombia
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- International Service for Peace (SIPAZ), Mexico
- Land Pastoral Commission (CPT), Brazil



Pax Christi International • Rue du Progrès 323 • 1030 Brussels • Belgium

Phone +32 (0)2 502 55 50 • Fax +32 (0)2 502 46 26 • www.paxchristi.net • hello@paxchristi.net