



*While commemorating its own 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Pax Christi International issues this statement with other Catholic voices advocating for peace, justice, and human rights at the United Nations (UN). Like the UN, the Pax Christi movement and other Catholic organisations were born out of World War II's devastation and the desire to save subsequent generations from the scourge of war.*

## **Statement on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations: A call for its strengthening in the (post) COVID-19 era**

On this United Nations (UN) day, 24 October, 2020, Pax Christi International along with its members and partners commemorates the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN system and wholeheartedly recognizes the global organisation's contributions to peace, justice, and human rights around the world.

Accomplishments include the development of human rights, fostering sustainable development and climate action, governing global finance, adopting disarmament standards and taking initiatives to end hostilities (such as the UN Secretary General's recent appeal for a global COVID-19 ceasefire). Our members and partners around the globe have advocated at the UN for such actions and have actively participated in their implementation.

While celebrating its achievements and supporting its work, we are deeply worried about the challenges the UN is facing. These concerns are especially pressing in these times when multilateral responses to social, economic and environmental issues, including to the devastating COVID-19 health crisis, are urgently needed.

We are particularly concerned with the UN Security Council's recurring inability to act in critical situations<sup>1</sup>, the unwillingness of some member states to step up action in response to the climate crisis, the inadequate responses to urgent needs of migrants and refugees, unaccomplished nuclear disarmament and the lack of engagement with the world's citizens.<sup>2</sup> Hopefully, this year's anniversary and the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis will create momentum for a long-awaited strengthening of the UN system, for which the support of all member states is urgently needed.

On 21 September 2020, in a General Assembly meeting to commemorate the UN's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, world leaders adopted a declaration honouring the multilateral framework and

---

<sup>1</sup> Examples include the Security Council inability to deal with the crisis regarding the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, the civil conflict in Syria and the disputed elections in Belarus. Moreover, it took the Council several months to back the UN Secretary General's March appeal for a global COVID-19 ceasefire.

<sup>2</sup> 74% of respondents to an UN global consultation to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary see the UN as "essential" in tackling global challenges when looking at the future. However, over half see the UN as remote from their lives and say they don't know much about it. See p. 99 of *The Future We Want: The United Nations We Need* report (September 2020): [https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un75report\\_september\\_final\\_english.pdf](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un75report_september_final_english.pdf).

pledged to better live up to the promise to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.<sup>3</sup> To honor that promise we urge UN member states to reject nationalistic populism, and instead to work together for a more sustainable world.

In his recent speech to the General Assembly, Pope Francis said: “The pandemic has shown us that we cannot live without one another, or worse still, pitted against one another. The UN was established to bring nations together, to be a bridge between peoples. Let us make good use of this institution in order to transform the challenge that lies before us into an opportunity to build together, once more, the future we all desire.”<sup>4</sup>

This year also marks five years since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. UN member states have committed to take steps to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure all people enjoy peace and prosperity. To achieve these goals by 2030, world leaders must rethink the global order, which is reaching its social, economic and ecological limits, as this year of disruption has clearly demonstrated.

We are concerned at the slowing of progress towards achieving the SDGs, especially as the pandemic is hitting vulnerable people the hardest.<sup>5</sup> The global fight against the pandemic can constitute an opportunity for nations to refocus on the SDGs with a view to achieving a fairer, better, and safer world for all.

**On the occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN and in this year of unprecedented crisis for humanity, we ask UN member states to renew their commitment for an enhanced UN system in the (post) COVID-19 era and to take the following actions:**

- Supporting the Secretary-General’s prioritisation of conflict prevention and sustaining peace, as part of the restructuring of the UN peace and security pillar, by contributing to the work in the field of addressing root causes, peacemaking, mediation, peacekeeping and post-conflict efforts.
- Exploring, choosing, and implementing nonviolent approaches to resolving disputes that endanger international peace and security, amongst others on the basis of Article 33 of the UN Charter. Considering nonviolent strategies as the first option in response to violent or potentially violent societal challenges, instead of resorting to military action that risks further aggravating a situation.
- Increasing budgets for the functioning of the UN and in particular for the achievement of the SDGs by 2030 and for tackling the COVID-19 health crisis among vulnerable

---

<sup>3</sup> UN meeting coverage and press releases, *World Leaders Adopt Declaration Promising Safer, More Resilient World for Future Generations, as General Assembly Marks United Nations Seventy-Fifth Anniversary* (1 September 2020), GA/12267, available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/ga12267.doc.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Permanent Observer Mission of the Holy See to the UN, *Address of His Holiness, Pope Francis, To The United Nations General Assembly* (25 September 2020), 75<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly, available at: <https://holyseemission.org/contents//statements/5f6df8f78dd6b.php>.

<sup>5</sup> SDG Knowledge Hub, *UN Secretary-General Releases 2020 SDG Progress Report* (19 May 2020), available at: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/un-secretary-general-releases-2020-sdg-progress-report/>.

populations. Shifting funds to SDG budgets and away from global military spending, which saw last year the largest annual increase in a decade reaching \$1917 billion.<sup>6</sup>

- Signing and subsequently ratifying the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, adopted in 2017 at the UN in New York, or if already done so, to encourage other countries to also sign and ratify the treaty. Fully implementing the treaty once it enters into force, which will be 90 days after the 50<sup>th</sup> ratification (to date: 47 ratifications)<sup>7</sup>, including its provisions on victim assistance and environmental remediation.

With support of the following members and partners:

PAX for Peace, Netherlands  
Pax Christi Flanders, Belgium  
Pax Christi France  
Pax Christi Germany  
Pax Christi England & Wales  
Pax Christi Scotland  
Pax Christi Portugal  
Casa Generalizia della Societa del Sacro Cuore, Italy  
Pax Christi USA  
Pax Christi of Salina, Kansas, United States  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, United States  
Missionary Society of St. Columban, United States  
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team, United States  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, United States  
Union canadienne des Ursulines, Canada  
Pax Christi Australia  
Pax Christi Aotearoa-New Zealand  
Pax Christi Korea  
Pax Christi Philippines  
Japan Catholic Council for Justice and Peace  
Forum Masyarakat Katolik Indonesia-Yogyakarta  
Human Rights Office - Kandy Sri Lanka  
Pax Christi Peru  
Conferencia de Religiosos de Colombia - Comisión JPIC  
Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT), Brazil  
Pax Christi Bukavu, Congo  
Réseau Jeunes dans le Monde pour la Paix (RJMP/ASBL), Congo  
Union pour la Promotion/Défense des DH et de l'Environnement (UPDDHE/GL), Congo  
Centre Jeunes Kamenge / Bujumbura, Burundi  
Peace Tree Network, Kenya  
International family of Catholic social justice organisations (CIDSE)  
The Union of the European Conferences of Major Superiors (UCESM)  
RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking against Trafficking and Exploitation)  
Neighbourhood Community Network  
MIAMSI Catholic movement

---

<sup>6</sup> SIPRI, *Global military expenditure sees largest annual increase in a decade—says SIPRI—reaching \$1917 billion in 2019* (27 April 2020), available at: <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2020/global-military-expenditure-sees-largest-annual-increase-decade-says-sipri-reaching-1917-billion>.

<sup>7</sup> See this ICAN website for the latest updates regarding the signatures and ratifications of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons : [https://www.icanw.org/signature\\_and\\_ratification\\_status](https://www.icanw.org/signature_and_ratification_status).

Edmund Rice International  
VIVAT International  
Association Internationale des Charités  
International Coordination of Young Christian Workers  
International Office of Catholic Education (OIEC)  
World Organization of Former Students of Catholic Education (OMAEC)  
Servicio Internacional Cristiano de Solidaridad con los Pueblos de América Latina (SICSAL)  
Alianza Global CONVIDA 20  
Comité Óscar Romero de Murcia, Spain  
Barandiaran Kristua Alkartea - Pax Romana Pais Basque, Spain  
Groupment Européen de Recherche et Formation des Enseignants Chrétiens (GERFEC), France  
Corporación SOS Ambiental, Colombia  
Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente (DHUMA), Peru  
Center for Peace Education, Miriam College, The Philippines  
Niall O'Brien Center for Peace, The Philippines  
Edmund Rice Center Sydney, Australia  
Seeds of Peace Africa International (SOPA), Kenya  
Franciscan Peace Center, United States  
Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center, United States  
Carmelite NGO, United States  
Society of Helpers, United States  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious, United States  
Sisters of Charity Federation, United States  
Sisters of St. Francis, Clinton, Iowa, United States  
Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, United States  
Dominican Sisters of Hope, United States  
Office of PJEI, Sisters of Charity of Saint Elizabeth, United States  
Dominican Sisters of Houston, United States  
Dominican Sisters of Peace, United States  
Congregation of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, United States  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S Provinces  
Congregation of the Mission, United States  
Sisters of Charity, BVM, United States  
Congregations of St. Joseph, United States  
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, United States  
Dominican Leadership Conference, United States  
Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph, United States  
Sisters of the Holy Union of the Sacred Hearts, United States  
Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate, United States  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership, United States  
Adrian Dominican Sisters, United States  
Sisters of the Humility of Mary, United States  
School Sisters of Notre Dame, United States  
Sisters of the Presentation, United States  
Dominican Sisters Grand Rapids MI, United States  
Holy Union Sisters U.S. Province  
Roman Union Ursulines of the USA  
Dominican Sisters & Associates of Racine WI, United States  
Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa, United States  
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, United States  
Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland, Ohio, United States  
Sisters of Charity of New York, United States

Sisters of St. Mary of Namur, United States  
IHM Sisters Leadership Council, United States  
Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart, United States  
Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods Indiana, United States