While commemorating its own 75th 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 75th 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 75th 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, 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. 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 75th anniversary, world leaders adopted a declaration honouring the multilateral framework and

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1 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.

2 74% of respondents to an UN global consultation to mark the 75th 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.³ 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.”⁴

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.⁵ 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 75th 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

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⁴ 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), 75th Session of the UN General Assembly, available at: https://holyseemission.org/contents/statements/5f6d8f78dd6b.php.

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.⁶

- 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 50th ratification (to date: 47 ratifications)⁷, 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


⁷ 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.
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 International 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
Groupement 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