

12 October 2020

Dear Ms Georgieva and Mr Malpass,

We write in a spirit of solidarity and hope as representatives of Christian communities from all corners of the globe.

Each of us has borne witness to the impact the coronavirus pandemic has had on the most vulnerable members of our communities through illness, death, hunger and loss of livelihoods. We live and work every day with those who are suffering and share their hopes and fears for the future.

Both of your organisations have acknowledged the devastation the pandemic is causing. The World Bank has warned the pandemic “threatens to push over 100 million people into extreme poverty and is exacerbating inequality throughout the world” and has urged governments and private creditors to suspend and reduce debts, whilst the International Monetary Fund has recognised that “many countries now face multiple crises – a health crisis, a financial crisis, and a collapse in commodity prices”.

As our governments do all they can to respond to the pandemic, we witness the ongoing injustice that the money so desperately needed for medicines, personal protective equipment, emergency food supplies and social safety nets is still being diverted to debt repayments.

As such, we ask you to show courageous leadership at this critical moment and cancel debts owed by developing countries to your institutions for the duration of this crisis. Debt cancellation is the most immediate way to release the finance required to prevent millions of our sisters and brothers being needlessly pushed into poverty by the pandemic.

Our call echoes that from Christian leaders worldwide. In his message to mark the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, His Holiness Pope Francis urged “the cancellation of the debt of the most vulnerable countries, in recognition of the severe impacts of the medical, social and economic crises they face as a result of Covid-19”. We are aware that dozens of faith leaders earlier this year have similarly urged governments and the International Monetary Fund itself to cancel debts.

To date, your institutions have taken several steps to respond to the crisis, including the IMF’s decision to cover debt payments owed over a six-month period for 28 countries, as well as the availability of new emergency finance from the IMF and World Bank worth \$88 billion thus far.

Yet these initiatives, though welcome, are insufficient and do not respond to the urgency and magnitude of the crisis. Without the cancellation of debts, there remains a grave risk that developing countries will not have the money so desperately and urgently needed to halt the spread of the virus, to treat people suffering from the virus and to mitigate and recover from the economic and social destruction threatened by the virus.

Both of your institutions hold significant reserves in US dollars and in gold, which are held for such a time as this. It is therefore essential that these reserves are used to relieve the burden of debts for countries in precarious need.

The role of the IMF and World Bank is central to tackling this crisis in a way that prioritises the needs of the most vulnerable people, learns from the past and seeks to heal and rebuild our world.

As you meet this week, we continue to pray for you and remain committed to ongoing cooperation.

Signatories:

Africa

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo Besungu OFMCap – Archevêque Métropolitain de Kinshasa

Cardinal Berhaneyesus D. Souraphiel, CM – Metropolitan Catholic Archbishop of Addis Ababa; President of CBCE & Chancellor of ECU; Chairman of Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission

Père Jean Germain Rajoelison – Second Deputy Secretary General, SECAM (Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar)

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki – General Secretary, All Africa Conference of Churches

Mgr. Philippe Rukamba – Evêque de Butare

Bishop Abraham Desta – Apostolic Vicar of Meki

Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, SJ – President of Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar

Fr. Ratsimbazafy Fulgence, SJ – Provincial, Jesuits in Madagascar

Bishop Dr. Arkanjelo Wani Lemi – Chairman, South Sudan Council of Churches; President Bishop, Africa Inland Church

Rt. Rev. James Par Tap Hon – Moderator, South Sudan Presbyterian Evangelical Church

Most Rev. Dr. Justin Badi Arama – Archbishop and Primate, Episcopal Church of South Sudan; Metropolitan Bishop of Juba Diocese

Most Rev. Msgr. Dr. Stephen Ameyu Martin – Metropolitan Archbishop of Juba; Apostolic Administrator Catholic Dioceses of Torit and Wau

Rt. Rev. Peter Gai Lual Marrow – Moderator of the General Assembly, Presbyterian Church of South Sudan & Sudan

Bishop Dr. Isaiah Majok Dau – General Overseer, Sudan Pentecostal Church

Bishop William Muzee Weresen – Regional Bishop, Africa Inland Church

Fr. James Oyet Latansio – General Secretary, South Sudan Council of Churches

Mgr. Philippe Ranaivomanana – évêque d’Antsirabe

Sr. Julia Anne Sheehy, PBVM

Most Rev. Bishop Abune Tesfasellassie Medhin – Bishop of Adigrat, Ethiopia and CIDSE Ecclesiastical Assistant

Most Rev. Bishop Seyoum Fransua – Apostolic Vicar of Hosanna; National Director of Pontifical Mission Societies in Ethiopia

Sr. Judith Bingura – Leader, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Africa Unit

Sr. Judyta, Elzbieta Ligieza, SSsP – Regional Leader, Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, Region of Ethiopia-South Sudan

Most Rev. Gabriel Y. Anokye – Archbishop of Kumasi, Ghana; President, Caritas Africa

Most Rev. Andrew Jagaye Karnley – Bishop of Cape Palmas

Most Rev. Bishop Anthony Richard Fallah Borwah – President, Catholic Bishops' Conference of Liberia; Bishop of Gbarnga

Mgr. Honoré Barhebwa Tukulenabo – Vicaire Général du diocèse d'Uvira

Most Rev. Edward Tamba Charles – Archbishop of Freetown

Most Rev. Charles A.M. Campbell – Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Bo

Most Rev. Henry Aruna – Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Kenema

Most Rev. Bishop Natale Paganelli, sx – Apostolic Administrator, Diocese of Makeni

Rt. Rev. Mark K. Ngobeh – Presiding Bishop, Methodist Church Sierra Leone

Rt. Rev. Arnold C. Temple – Bishop Emeritus, Methodist Church Sierra Leone

Bishop Tamba A. Koroma – Bishop of the National Pentecostal Church (Sierra Leone)

Rev. Henry Abioseh Samuels – Head of Mission, Vine Memorial Baptist Mission (Sierra Leone)

Rev. John Adikali Baminhoma – National Superintendent, Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone

Asia

Cardinal Patrick D'Rozario, CSC – Archbishop Emeritus, Dhaka Catholic Archdiocese

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara – General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia

Most Rev. Shorot Francis Gomes – Auxiliary Bishop, Dhaka Catholic Archdiocese

Sr. Mary Minoti, SMRA - Superior General, SMRA Congregation

Rev. Fr. Leonard C. Rebeiro – Administrator, The Chittagong Catholic Archdiocese

Rev. Fr. Gordon Dias – Member of College of Consultors, The Chittagong Catholic Archdiocese

Most Rev. James Romen Boiragi, DD – Bishop of Khulna Diocese

Rev. Jacob S. Biswas – Vicar General of Khulna Diocese

Rev. Fr. Martin Mondol – Rector, St. Francis Xavier Seminary, Khulna

Sr. Alice Zacharias (Berchmans), SC – In charge, Sisters of Charity, Santa Maria Sick Assistance Centre, Khulna

Sr. Lorrin (MC) – In charge, Nirmola Shishua Biaban, Missionaries of Charity, Khulna

Sr. Clara Gharami (OSL) – Regional Superior, Luigine Sisters Bethania House, Khulna

Most Rev. Gervas Rozario, DD – Bishop of Rajshahi Catholic Diocese

Fr. Paul Gomes – Vicar General of Rajshahi Catholic Diocese

Fr. William Murmu – Chancellor of Rajshahi Catholic Diocese

Most Rev. Dr. Justin Gnanapragasam – Bishop of Jaffna; Chairman, Caritas Sri Lanka – SEDEC

Sr. Victoria Embate – On behalf of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Philippine Unit

Sr. Riffat Sadiq – Leader, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pakistan Unit

Sr. Shahnaz Barkat – Secretary, Sisters of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pakistan Unit

Fr. Renzo De Luca, SJ – Provincial, Province of Japan, Society of Jesus

Fr. Antonio Moreno, SJ – President, Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

Fr Greg Soetomo, SJ – Socius, Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

Fr. Stephen Chow, SJ – Provincial, Chinese Province of the Society of Jesus

Dr. Joseph Xavier, SJ – Director, Indian Social Institute, Bangalore

Fr. David Solomon, SJ – Director, Bagaicha Social Centre, Ranchi

Latin America

Bispo Naudal Alves Gomes – Bispo Primaz do Brasil, Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

Rev. Dr. Darío Barolin – Secretario Ejecutivo, Alianza de Iglesias Presbiterianas y Reformadas de América Latina

Mara Manzoni Luz – Regional Director, Centro Regional Ecu­m­é­nico de Asesoría y Servicio (CREAS)

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Mg. Milton Mejía – Coordinador, Qonakuy

Europe

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ – Archbishop of Luxembourg; President of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE)

Most Rev. Leo Wagener – Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg

Abbot Patrick Muller – Vicar General of the Archdiocese of Luxembourg

Most Rev. Stephan Burger – Archbishop of Freiburg im Breisgau

Most Rev. Heiner Wilmer, SCI – Bishop of Hildesheim; Lead Bishop of the German Bishops' Conference for Justice and Peace

Abbot Bernardus Peeters, ocsa – President, National Conference of the Dutch Religious (representing 3,500 female and male religious in the Netherlands)

Sr. Monica Raassen, crss – Vice-President, National Conference of the Dutch Religious

Fr Franck Janin, SJ – President, Jesuit Conference of European Provincials

Fr. Antonio España, SJ – Provincial, Spanish Jesuit Province

Fr. Miguel Almeida, SJ – Provincial, Portuguese Jesuit Province

Fr. Dr. Bernhard Bürgler, SJ – Provincial, Austrian Jesuit Province

Fr. Jan Roser, SJ – Provincial, German Jesuit Province

Msgr. Lode Van Hecke – évêque de Gand (Belgique)

Most Rev. Jean-Pierre Delville – Bishop of Liège

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Fr. Leonard Moloney, SJ – Provincial, Jesuit Irish Province

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Sr. Grace Redmond – South West Provincial, Presentation Sisters in Ireland

Sr. Grace McKernan – Presentation Leadership Team, South West Province, Ireland

Sr. Eileen Clear – Presentation Leadership Team, South West Province, Ireland

Sr. Pauline Casey - Presentation Leadership Team, South West Province, Ireland

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Sr. Aurea Dias – Presentation Sister, Monasterevin, Ireland

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Sr. Julie Watson – Congregational Leader, Union of Sisters of Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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Rt. Rev. Joseph Toal – Bishop of Motherwell; Bishop President of SCIAF

Rt. Rev. John Arnold – Bishop of Salford; Chair of CAFOD

Fr. Damian Howard, SJ – Provincial, Jesuits in Britain

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Sr. Justine Mulcahy, PBVM

Sr. Margaret Finnegan, PBVM

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The Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul (Canada)

IBVM (Loretto Sisters) Canada

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Sr. Nonie Gutzler, MM – Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic

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Sr. Jean Steffes, CSA – Congregation of Sisters of St. Agnes

Sr. Rosemarie Abate – Sisters, Home Visitors of Mary

Leadership Team – Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Western Province

Dominican Sisters ~ Grand Rapids

Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Western American Area

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership

USA Adorers of the Blood of Christ

Global

Sr. Alessandra Smerilli, FMA – Coordinator, Economy Taskforce of the Vatican Commission for Covid-19

Prof Isabel Apawo Phiri – Deputy General Secretary, World Council of Churches

Most Rev. Dr Josiah Idowu-Fearon – Secretary General, Anglican Communion

Bishop Ivan M Abrahams – General Secretary, World Methodist Council

Rev. Dr. Chris Ferguson – General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches

Sr. Helen Burke, PBVM – Congregational Leader, Union of Presentation Sisters

Rev Dr Collin Cowan – General Secretary, Council for World Mission

Mr Rudelmar Bueno de Faria – General Secretary, ACT Alliance – Action by Churches Together

Rev. Thomas H. Smolich, SJ – International Director, Jesuit Refugee Service