

FINAL VERSION

Solidarity in a Time of Crisis

Message from the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions

The EU has designated 2010 the year for the eradication of poverty and social exclusion. This theme takes on a new significance against the backdrop of attempts to address the failed and unjust systems that caused the global financial and economical crisis. This crisis has proved to be a powerful reminder of the destructive potential of unregulated economic growth and models of development that fail to address issues of inequality and social justice. It is the latest in a series of international crises – including food, water, natural resources, energy, nuclear weapons, and climate change – that threaten peace, stability and justice in our world today.

This message, from the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, representing 29 European countries, is an appeal to all European nations. We need to recognize that our only hope of achieving a long-term response to the current crises lies in a renewed commitment to solidarity and cooperation on a global scale. Drawing our inspiration from the Christian Scriptures and the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, as articulated in the recent messages of Pope Benedict XVI, we argue that the core values informing our response to the current challenges must be the dignity of the human person, the common good and the promotion of integral human development.

We are now five years from the deadline for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and any attempt by the more developed nations to renege on the commitment to achieving these targets by 2015 must be resisted. In our increasingly globalized world we are more aware than ever of the inter-dependence between nations and the need to work for the common good on a global scale, highlighted in a particular way by the challenge of climate change. At the same time however, the rights and dignity of the most vulnerable throughout the world continue to be threatened by the actions and policies of the more developed nations. The increasing migration of those affected to EU countries has brought the challenge of solidarity closer to home in a very real way.

Crucially, however, the present time is not without signs of hope. Above all, we should not underestimate our own ability to bring about change. While it may be undeniable that the problems we currently face demand solutions on a global scale, we all have the capacity to exert our influence in favor of the common good on a number of levels: through political action, through the lifestyle choices we make and through our day-to-day

contacts with others. At European level, our response to the financial crisis offers the opportunity to examine and transform our economic policies.

With this in mind, the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, makes an appeal to all European nations to:

- Take more effective measures to fight against poverty and social exclusion, recognizing that this is as essential to the future of all nations as the protection of the financial system.
- Introduce a system of standards and regulations that would ensure that economic and financial activity are not conducted to the detriment of human development and in contradiction of our obligations in terms of international solidarity.
- Encourage transparency by establishing an international standard or label that would be awarded to companies who sign up to the above norms and regulations.
- Introduce a tax (of approximately 0.005%) on financial transactions to generate income, which would be dedicated to Overseas Development Aid.
- Promote a development policy that fosters the best conditions for decent work and life in all countries.
- Remove unfair conditions attached to development aid, such as the insistence that African developing countries cooperate with Frontex (the EU border control agency).
- Continue to set an example for developed countries through measures to address and reduce the causes of climate change.
- Support developing countries in their efforts to address climate change through the provision of sufficient resources, taking into account the restraints they face in terms of their capacity to deal with the consequences.

For more information contact:

The Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (Justice and Peace Europe or CEJPC) is a European network that today regroups 31 national Justice and Peace commissions. Each one is established or recognized by its Catholic bishops' conference. The secretariat of CEJPC is currently situated in Paris (France).