



13 July 2020

The Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the Group of 20 (G20)

Your Excellencies:

Our organizations, the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and Council for World Mission (CWM), have followed with profound concern how the COVID-19 pandemic and the related economic crisis have continued to destroy lives and livelihood around the world. To date this has resulted in more than half a million deaths, massive unemployment, increase of debts, poverty, and inequality in many parts of the world.

We want to express our appreciation for the G20's prompt efforts to address the crises by offering fiscal measures to support public health response, temporary debt relief for the poorest countries, and emergency financing facilities as agreed at your last meeting on 15 April 2020. We also welcome the G20's recognition of the necessity for governments to work together in a coordinated and coherent manner. At the same time, we think that more can and ought to be done to mitigate human suffering and promote a truly just and sustainable recovery.

As you are well aware, the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how many countries are ill-equipped and poorly resourced to respond to an emergency of this scale and magnitude. It has exposed the deeper crisis which is a result of the current economic and development model, namely the exploitation of resources in a manner that destroys the planet and leaves the majority of people in poverty.

This moment offers us an unprecedented opening to collectively examine the current order and to 'build back better' a different system that nurtures the health, wellbeing and resilience of communities and the planet for generations to come. Here we would like to underline that COVID-19 recovery measures and policies must be compatible with urgent and ambitious action to address the climate crisis.

We believe that it is feasible today to embark on essential transformation in global and national development and economic policies and practices because the majority of people do not want to go back to the 'old normal.' For these changes to be viable and sustainable, discussions must also take place under the aegis of the United Nations (UN) where there is broad participation of countries and civil society. Multilateralism must remain as a key principle and approach for addressing global challenges.

In light of the foregoing, permit us to share, on behalf of the churches, some proposals for the G20 to take into consideration at the upcoming meetings of the finance ministers and central bank governors and at the Leaders' Summit in November 2020:

- **Allocate adequate financial resources to the public health and social protection of the hundreds of millions of people whose livelihoods have been decimated by the pandemic and the related response measures.** This includes ensuring widespread testing, provision of protective and other equipment for healthcare, essential workers and hospitals; healthcare coverage for all, including the most vulnerable; the search for an effective, accessible, and affordable vaccine or cure; basic income grants, unemployment assistance, and wage subsidy schemes; as well as support for small businesses, and availing finance to support the COVID-19 related and other humanitarian needs.
- **Cancel the external debts of low- and middle-income countries** (which were at damaging levels even before the pandemic) to free up resources for governments to respond effectively to the COVID-19 pandemic and to build the resilience and livelihoods of people and communities.
- **Implement global tax reform to fund the recovery.** This would include: the initiation of a progressive wealth tax, financial transaction tax and carbon tax at national and global levels; the reintroduction of capital gains and inheritance taxes; measures to curb tax evasion and avoidance; and reparations for slavery and other social and ecological debts. Furthermore, a COVID-19 surcharge must be levied on the super-wealthy, equity and hedge funds, and multinational, e-commerce and digital corporations that are reaping even greater returns from the current crisis to resource the critical response to the pandemic.
- **Safeguard public goods and the ecological commons;** guarantee living wages for all; and privilege such life-affirming areas as health, education, water and sanitation, agro-ecology, and renewable energy in both COVID-19 recovery and longer-term plans.



Our organizations collectively represent more than 500 million Christians worldwide. We hope that you will take our proposals into account in your deliberations and would appreciate a response to this letter.

We pray that you have constructive and transformative meetings.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ioan Saucă".

Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă
Interim General Secretary
World Council of Churches

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Ferguson".

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Junge".

Rev. Dr Martin Junge
General Secretary
Lutheran World Federation

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Collin Cowan".

Rev. Dr Collin Cowan
General Secretary
Council for World Mission

Copies:

G20 Chair

G20 countries

H.E. Mr Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General