



COVID-19 Recovery: Building Back Better¹

Seventy-five years ago, the world was in a deep crisis after the devastation of World War II. Negotiations between governments began that resulted in the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Common efforts to fight poverty and illiteracy, protect human rights, strengthen cooperation and maintain peace have been steps towards a vision of the world “free from fear, free from want” imagined in the UN Charter.

In 2020, the international community honors the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. We embarked on a Decade of Action for the Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate sustainable solutions to the world’s biggest challenges. However, we now live in a world struggling to address the coronavirus pandemic which has dramatically affected political, economic and social life across the globe.

During a crisis, global cooperation and solidarity are urgently needed, but nationalism, racism, intolerance, xenophobia and border closures have too often prevailed. Measures to fight the pandemic have led to restrictions of long-established civic rights and democratic structures. An effective global response will require building consensus and strengthening concerted action to mitigate the multiple challenges we all face.

The pandemic is casting a shadow on hopes for sustainable development, achievements in the status of women, and other human and environmental concerns. The impacts of the virus magnify existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, making us painfully aware of gaps in social protection systems. Before COVID-19, over one billion people were without access to basic human needs, and 700 million were living in extreme poverty, mostly women and children. In many countries, health and social protection systems are inadequate, revealed by the lack of

¹ This civil society statement “COVID-19 Recovery: Building Back Better” was initiated, drafted and concluded by leaders of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) based in Vienna, Austria, together with the chairs of CoNGO substantive NGO committees operating there. This statement follows and reinforces the October 2019 CoNGO Declaration on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Endorsement of this statement by NGOs accredited within the UN system is now open. To endorse, email Liberato Bautista, CoNGO President, at president@ngocongo.org. For more information about the background of the statement, email Martina Gredler, CoNGO Second Vice President, svp@ngocongo.org.

CoNGO INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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provisions to protect and test medical staff and treat the infected. Older persons are particularly vulnerable to the disease and face increased discrimination.

The pandemic has led to significant restrictions on people's freedom of movement and peaceful assembly; the misuse of emergency measures may further erode human rights. We have seen authoritarian forces seize the opportunity to expand their power, which has adverse impacts on civic space and the ability of communities and individuals to exercise their rights. The prospects of a long-term global recession raise serious concerns over how long and to what extent restrictions will be in force. After the public health crisis recedes, we must ensure that measures curtailing civil liberties are fully lifted to protect democratic institutions and citizen participation.

We representatives of international NGOs in consultative relationship with the UN fear that while attention is focused on the global health crisis, efforts to address the ongoing climate crisis, achieve sustainable development and gender equality, protect human rights and promote peace are being neglected.

We continue to work in partnerships to develop a global plan of action to address the multiple challenges we all face, while promoting human rights, democracy, climate action, gender equality, justice, peace and security, and sustainable development.

We are determined to emerge from this crisis and build a better world for all.

We call on the 193 UN Member States to renew their commitment to the UN and to turn this international crisis into an opportunity, using it as a starting point to rebuild economies that are inclusive, and based on sustainable production and consumption:

- to accelerate climate action by rebuilding economies, transport and industries in a carbon neutral manner;
- to recognize and address the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on women, children, older persons, and other vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- to change the militarized discourse of war and threat to one of care and solidarity, within countries as well as between Member States;
- to provide universal access to and funding for health and social protections for all people;
- to reallocate military spending and increase investments in meeting human needs to create a healthier and more peaceful planet and achieve Agenda 2030;
- to support non-governmental community organizations, human rights defenders and women's groups, and include them in national and global recovery and reconstruction efforts;
- to strengthen the UN System and provide the necessary funding to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and ensure inclusive societies and economies, a sustainable environment and a more peaceful world.

Only if we continue to work in partnerships and promote human rights, democracy, rule of law, climate action, gender equality, sustainable development, peace and security, can we emerge from this crisis and build a better world for all.

**Vienna, Austria
12 May 2020**

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Endorsements as of 28 May 2020

(To endorse, please email Liberato Bautista at president@ngocongo.org)

The following organizations have joined the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) in this Statement:

1. AFEW International
2. African Action on Aids
3. Agewell Foundation
4. Agrenska Foundation
5. American Medical Women's Association (AMWA)
6. Amman Center for Human Rights Studies (ACHRS)
7. Arab Center for the Independence of the Judiciary and the Legal Profession
8. Arab Society for Academic Freedom (ASAF)
9. ARISE® Network
10. Armenian Assembly of America
11. Asia South Pacific Association for Basic Adult Education (ASPBAE)
12. Association Camerounaise pour la Prise en charge des Personnes Agées (ACAMAGE)
13. Association Internationale des Charités (AIC)
14. Association for Farmers Rights Defense (AFRD Georgia)
15. Awaz Centre for Development Services (ACDS)
16. Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC)
17. Brazilian Harm Reduction and Human Rights Network (REDUC)
18. Centro de Culturas Indigenas del Perú (CHIRAPAQ)
19. Centro de Información y Educación para la Prevencion del Abuso de Drogas (CEDRO)
20. Colonie des Pionniers du Developpement (CPD)
21. Comité français des organisations non gouvernementales pour la liaison et l'information des Nations-Unies
22. Confederation of Asia-Pacific Chambers of Commerce and Industry (CACCI)
23. Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
24. Congregation of the Mission
25. Council General International of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP)
26. CREDO-Action
27. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
28. Dianova International
29. Dominicans for Justice and Peace
30. Dominican Leadership Conference
31. Election Network in the Arab Region (ENAR)
32. Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI)
33. European Federation of Older Students at Universities (EFOSU)
34. European Union of Women (EUW)
35. European Youth Forum (EYF)

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36. For Alternative Approaches to Addiction, Think & Do Tank (FAAAT)
37. Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas (FAWCO)
38. Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-Onlus
39. Fundación Global Democracia y Desarrollo (FUNGLODE)
40. Fundacion para Estudio e Investigación de la Mujer (FEIM)
41. Global Distribution Advocates, Inc.
42. Global Family NGO (New Delhi, India)
43. Global Foundation for Democracy and Development (GFDD)
44. Graduate Women International (GWI)
45. Guild of Service
46. Haiti Cholera Research Funding Foundation USA
47. Institute for Research and Development "Utrip", Slovenia (UTRIP)
48. International Alliance of Women (IAW)
49. International Association for Counselling (IAC)
50. International Association of Applied Psychology (IAAP)
51. International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
52. International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (IAGG)
53. International Association of Judges (IAJ)
54. International Association for Media and Communication (IAMC)
55. International Bureau for Epilepsy (IBE)
56. International Center for Environmental Education & Community Development (ICENECDEV)
57. International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC)
58. International Council of Psychologists (ICP)
59. International Council of Jewish Women
60. International Council of Women (ICW)
61. International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW)
62. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
63. International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE)
64. International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW)
65. International Federation on Ageing (IFA)
66. International Inner Wheel (IIW)
67. International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)
68. International Presentation Association (IPA)
69. International Progress Organization
70. International Public Relations Association (IPRA)
71. International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation (ISSTD)
72. International Union of Psychological Science (IUPsyS)
73. International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN)
74. Kolping International
75. L'Appui Solidarité pour le Renforcement de l'Aide au Développement
76. Le Project Imagine
77. League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS)
78. Lucis Trust—World Goodwill

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79. Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers (CFMSA)
80. Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc.
81. Medical Women's International Association
82. Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
83. Murna Foundation
84. Non-Violence International (NI)
85. Ordo Supremus Militaris Templi Hierosolymitani (OSMTH)
86. Pan Pacific and South East Asia Women's Association-International (PPSEAWA)
87. Pax Christi International
88. Peace Boat
89. Poverty Elimination and Community Education (PEACE) Foundation
90. Servas International
91. Shine Africa Foundation-Teso
92. Shirley Ann Sullivan Educational Foundation (SASEF)
93. Sisters of Charity Federation
94. Socialist International Women (SIW)
95. Society for International Development – Vienna Chapter (SID)
96. Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI)
97. Soka Gakkai International (SGI)
98. Somali Help-Age Association
99. Soroptimist International (SI)
100. Sri Swami Madhavananda World Peace Council (SSMWPC)
101. Sulabh International Social Service Organisation
102. Teresian Association
103. Tinker Institute on International Law and Organizations (TILO)
104. Trust for Youth Child Leadership (TYCL)
105. UNANIMA International
106. Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)
107. United Methodist Church-General Board of Church and Society (UMC-GBCS)
108. United Methodist Women (UMW)
109. United Religions Initiative
110. Universal Esperanto Association (UEA)
111. Universal Peace Federation (UPF)
112. Verein fuer Foerderung der Voelkerverstaendigung
113. Villa Maraini Foundation
114. Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (Women First International Fund)
115. VIVAT International
116. Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI)
117. World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy (WFM-IGP)
118. World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW)
119. World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)
120. World Student Christian Federation (WSCF)
121. World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ)

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122. Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa (YCAB)
123. Youth for a Better World | Montessori Model UN (MMUN)
124. Zonta International (ZI)

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