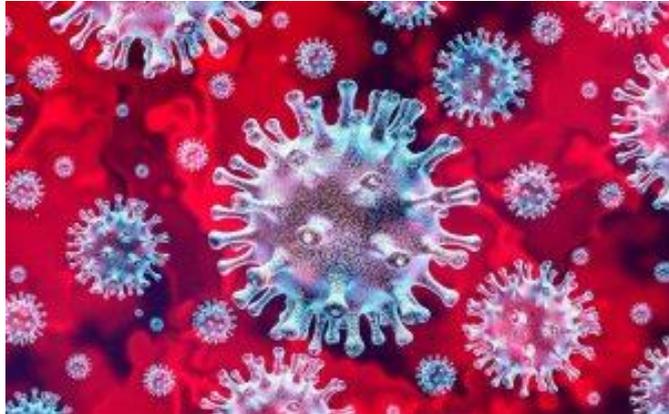




## Council General International's Statement with regard to Coronavirus

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul worldwide is joining the efforts of national and international health authorities to fight and minimise the effects of this pandemic sparked by the new Coronavirus outbreak (Covid-19).



The National Councils are responsible for guiding local Vincentian grassroots on this issue, and many Councils are actively involved in each country.

However, given the international scope of the Council General, some recommendations and guidelines for Conferences, Councils and special works of our Society are provided below, particularly in day-care centres, homes for the elderly, foster homes, shelters for the homeless and, above all, in home visits.

It is worth mentioning that there are much more harmful diseases than Covid-19. However, due to the wide dissemination thereof in the international media, this disease has had a great social impact; thus, affecting economy and tourism in many parts of the world, as well as resulting in painful and priceless deaths.

Council General's recommendations are as follows:

- **Home visits**

Extra precautionary measures and care for personal hygiene must be taken during home visits, especially when coming in contact with the people assisted. Each Superior Council will, on a provisional basis, ascertain the frequency of home visits, provided that the service offered to those in need is not compromised. Other forms of contact may be adopted on a temporary basis.

- **Charitable works**

Closest attention must be paid to general recommendations for cleaning, hygiene and disinfection in the works undertaken by SSVP, especially those whose target public is more vulnerable to the new Coronavirus, such as the elderly. With regard to visits to relatives or friends, the basic recommendations of hygiene set out by the health authorities shall be adopted. In rooms, parishes and other places where the Vincentian Conferences are held, conditions of strict cleanliness and hygiene must be observed.

- **Ongoing social projects**

The very same general recommendations shall be applied in the ongoing social projects carried out by Vincentian Conferences around the world. All safety protocols set out by the health authorities in each country must be followed.

- **Members and volunteers**

In all charitable activities, both active SSVP members (brothers and sisters) and volunteers shall take extreme precautions to avoid contagion: practice hand hygiene before and after each contact, and social distancing (at least, one metre), as recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

- **Employees of special works supported by the SSVP**

The aforementioned recommendations shall be adopted. Those responsible for these special works shall provide employees with what is needed to fight the virus: masks and hand sanitiser, among other products.

- **Councils' headquarters**

The employees of Vincentian headquarters shall observe the set of recommendations produced by the relevant authorities to prevent the spread of the virus. Each work, prior consultation with the respective Council, shall take appropriate precautionary measures, while ensuring continuity of services provided: telecommuting, flex schedules or shift work.

- **Cancelling or postponing meetings and other events**

At each Council's discretion, and if it deems it appropriate, activities, meetings, celebrations, ceremonies, seminars, plenary sessions, pilgrimages or other events may be cancelled or postponed. If not vital, it is recommended that they be postponed.

In the event of temporary suspension of activities within the Conferences, Councils or special works, all those related to the SSVP shall be duly informed, especially those in need, volunteers, fellow members, members of the clergy, etc.

- **International trips**

Leaders of the Council General (especially Territorial Vice-Presidents and Zone Coordinators) shall assess, with calm and caution, whether institutional visits scheduled in the 2020 agenda should be maintained, postponed or cancelled.

- **Nairobi 2020**

To date, the Council General International's annual meeting is to be held in Nairobi (Kenya), from 9 to 14 June 2020. The Council General will meet in April to further consider whether or not to hold this event.

- **Headquarters in Paris**

The Council General's Secretary General, fellow member Marie-Françoise Salésiani Payet, is taking all necessary measures to guarantee the best working conditions for the employees at Paris' headquarters, in accordance with the guidelines established by the French health authorities.

- **Final message**

The 16th President General, fellow member Renato Lima de Oliveira, asks the whole international Vincentian community to remain calm, without panic, fear or despair. In the age of social media, there can be many fake news and misinformation. The guidelines provided by health authorities in each country shall be strictly observed.

Should any contingency or doubt arise with regard to this issue, the Council General International is at the disposal of all Superior Councils. Our Ombudsman General, fellow member Alfons ten Velde, is available at [cgi.org@ssvpglobal.org](mailto:cgi.org@ssvpglobal.org). Let us pray together for the end of this pandemic. Prevention is of paramount importance.

I wish the international authorities would make the same efforts to end poverty and increase solidarity among peoples! Let us pray.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Renato Lima de Oliveira'.

Renato Lima de Oliveira

16th President General