



MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS
Peace, Social Justice and Integrity of Creation
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Faith Leaders Call on Senators to Lead Global Covid-19 Response

WASHINGTON, DC—On September 17, 2020, seventeen faith-based national organizations, representing thousands of members serving poor and vulnerable people around the world, delivered a [letter](#) to Senators urging them to pass legislation that includes international assistance to address the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Next Tuesday, September 29, representatives of many of the same organizations are scheduled to participate in a [prayer vigil](#) outside of the U.S. Capitol Building for passage of a new COVID-19 relief package that includes international assistance before Members of Congress leave at the end of month.

While the United States continues to manage the crisis at home, it is critical that we support impoverished countries that do not have the means to control the novel coronavirus in addition to their existing crises of crushing debt, food insecurity, and inadequate health infrastructure, the Catholic, Protestant and Muslim organizations wrote. They called on Senators to co-sponsor S.4139, the Support for Global Financial Institution Pandemic Response Act, and ensure its provisions (support for IMF-issued Special Drawing Rights) move forward alongside a funding package that includes \$20 billion for foreign assistance.

Ntama Bahati, African Faith and Justice Network: "The global spread of Covid-19 is further evidence that we cannot ignore the fact that we are one global community. It is in the best interest of everyone including the U.S. to participate in a global response to defeat this pandemic. Foreign aid, debt relief, debt forgiveness or the issuance of Special Drawing Rights by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), combined with robust transparency measures, will help save lives and the fragile global economy. We call on the U.S. Senate to pass S.4139, the Support for Global Financial Institution Pandemic Response Act. "

Ann Scholz, SSND, Leadership Conference of Women Religious: "Our faith and our shared humanity compel us to walk in solidarity with all those affected by the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic and the social and economic devastation it leaves in its wake. In the past the United States has provided crucial leadership and critical relief to those facing natural disasters, health emergencies or economic crises. We call on the Senate to ensure that our nation will once again lead the world in its efforts to meet the social, health and nutrition needs of those facing economic destruction as a result of the pandemic. As Pope Francis reminded us in his remarks during his September 2 general audience, "Solidarity is the road to take towards a post-pandemic world, towards the healing of our interpersonal and social sicknesses. There is no other path."

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Susan Gunn, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: “Time is running out and funding and leadership are needed immediately. In the absence of U.S. leadership on the global stage in this historic moment of crisis, when many millions of people in developing countries face the real fear of loss of life and livelihood, we call on Senators to act. There are three things Senators can do right now to save lives and defeat the coronavirus around the world. Investing \$20 billion in foreign aid now will pay off for decades to come, especially as children are well-nourished, vaccinated, and stay in school. We also urge Senators to support the IMF expanding debt relief for countries in need and issuing Special Drawing Rights, a reserve asset held by the IMF that was created for moments of crisis just like this, and that would cost nothing for U.S. taxpayers. These three components of an international response can bolster health care, protect workers and social welfare, and save lives, while stabilizing economies both here and abroad. As Pope Francis said, ‘Now is a good time to recover the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world.’”

Scott Wright, Director, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach: “As a missionary congregation accompanying the most vulnerable in 15 countries around the world, Columbans are deeply concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the communities we serve who are already facing overwhelming concerns about their health and their ability to feed their families. Families in countries like Peru and Mexico have no other choice but to risk their lives each day, knowing they are exposing themselves to the virus, in order to survive. We are especially concerned about indigenous communities in the Amazon, some of whom have been devastated by the virus and a few that are facing extinction. We urge Congress to take leadership in responding to this global pandemic as it adversely affects millions of lives in developing countries. We owe it to our children and children in developing countries to respond with effective measures that will not only save lives but ensure the stability of the global economy and global security for generations to come.”

Margaret Connley, Director, Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team: “At this time of multifaceted crises impacting the entire world, we call on Congress to act quickly and decisively to help poor countries address the impact of the pandemic. The virus has demonstrated that we are one world, and as our faith teaches us, we are our sisters and brothers’ keepers especially in this time of great need. Pope Francis warned us about the *globalization of indifference*. At \$0 cost to taxpayers, the U.S. could approve issuance of IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), which would free up over \$2 trillion in reserves. U.S. failure to support the SDR provision would be a shameful example of this indifference.”

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC) represents Maryknoll missionaries, who are Catholic men and women serving in impoverished communities around the world. The MOGC provides analysis and advocacy on issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation that affect the countries and communities where Maryknoll missionaries serve.

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