



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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The Great Green Wall of Africa

First proposed in 2007, the project to plant billions of trees along a 5,000 mile corridor in the Sahel of Africa is gaining momentum.

The Sahel is on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, stretching from the East coast of Africa to the West. One of the poorest places on Earth, and plagued with persistent drought, it is extremely vulnerable to climate change.

Begun in 2007, the Great Green Wall is an African-led project to plant billions of trees along the Sahel to robustly address three great challenges: to confront and prevent climate change; to halt land degradation and desertification in the Sahel; and to provide incomes for millions of people living in a dozen or so poverty-stricken countries in the region.

While proposals for a “green front” of trees in the Sahel are thought to date back to the 1950s, real planning for the project did not begin until the early 2000s. The project was approved in 2005 at a meeting of leaders of Sahelian States, and in 2007 the African Union (AU) officially launched it as the “Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative.”

By 2030, the project aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land, sequester 250 million tons of carbon dioxide, and create 10 million green jobs. The AU means for the project to address the social, economic, and environmental consequences of land degradation and desertification in the Sahel.

Without urgent, concerted action, temperatures in the Sahel are projected to rise significantly faster than the world average, perhaps reaching four degrees centigrade (7.2 degrees Fahrenheit) higher than pre-industrial averages by 2030. Akinwumi Adesina, president of the African Development Bank and a leader of the project, stated the urgency of the project: “Without the Great Green Wall, the Sahel as we know it may disappear.”

The climatic stresses put on the Sahel have resulted in violent conflict, both between local farmers and pastoralists and in regional warfare between armed militias.

Access to water resources is dwindling, the yields of subsistence farming are decreasing rapidly, and countless numbers of people continue to leave their homes to migrate into urban areas or embark on the risky trek to Europe. Restoring the Sahel as a place to live could prevent a huge wave of climate-induced migration in the coming decade.

In a National Geographic article, scientists involved in the project clarified that the project is not simply aimed at planting a wall of trees, but at carefully and

naturally regenerating the landscape through various means. Tree-planting is one major strategy throughout the project, but each region within the Sahel will have its own specific plan for restoring the land and improving the livelihoods of residents.

Despite its lofty ambitions, as of 2020 less than one fifth of the designated land area has been restored or rehabilitated. The achievements so far mostly come from

Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Senegal, which collectively have restored land or planted trees along 79 million acres of land – but even this is far from enough.

Cognizant of this stalling in the project, its leaders were able to accrue larger commitments of funding than originally anticipated at the One Planet Summit for Biodiversity held in Paris on January 11, with pledges totaling \$14.32 billion over the next four years, of which the African Development Bank agreed to contribute \$6.5 billion.

If successful, the project could have enormous impacts for people in the Sahel region, but it also could be a model for the global community of the power of natural and locally-driven solutions to climate change. “The Great Green Wall is a new world wonder in the making,” said Amina Mohammed, the UN deputy secretary general. “It shows that if we work with nature, rather than against it, we can build a more sustainable and equitable future.”§

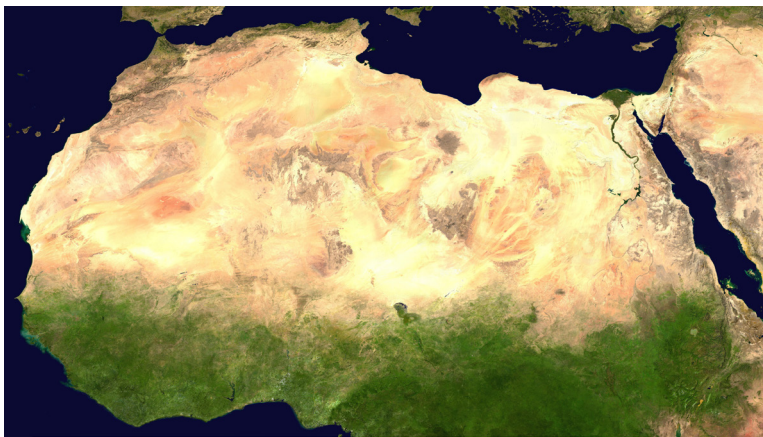


Photo: Satellite view of the Sahara, courtesy of NASA. Available via Wikipedia in the public domain.

Haiti's Growing Political Crisis

The political situation in Haiti has brought the country to the “verge of explosion.”

The brewing political crisis in Haiti recently reached a boiling point when President Jovenel Moïse refused to step down from power on February 7. Many see this move by President Moïse as the latest step in the dismantling of democracy in the country which has led to chaos and violence.

President Moïse claims that because an interim government occupied power during his first year in office, his five-year term began in 2017 rather than 2016. Several prominent members of the opposition party and the Haitian judiciary dissented, citing the Haitian constitution. Nighttime arrests of 18 dissenters followed, including one Haitian Supreme Court justice. On Friday, February 5, the U.S. State Department weighed in on President Moïse's side, a move that was criticized by many Haitians and advocates in the United States. Several U.S. Members of Congress also issued an open letter to the Biden administration calling for a condemnation of Moïse's actions and a transitional government in Haiti.

The political crisis has sent the country into chaos. In late January, a group of Haitian Catholic bishops released a statement saying that the nation was on the “verge of explosion.” Mass demonstrations led by the opposition have been met with violence by gangs, which largely operate with impunity or even under government orders. Kidnapping for ransom has become rampant in the past year, so much so that schools have been shut down and students are reportedly organizing among themselves to collect ransom for their missing classmates.

This new wave of political instability intensifies the grave insecurity already felt by the Haitian population, 60 percent of which was living under the poverty line even before the severe economic fallout from the pandemic.

The Haitian government suffered a great blow last year when the terms of two-thirds of the national legislature expired without President Moïse setting in motion the necessary mechanisms to hold new elections. Now, only 11 elected officials hold power in Haiti, as in addition to the dissolving of the legislature, all mayors in Haiti were suspended.

Since then, Moïse has been ruling by decree and seeking to expand his constitutional power. In April, he plans to hold a referendum on a new constitution that many fear will add to his unchecked power. In a Feb.

13 statement, three top law schools in the United States which collaborate with Haitian civil society called on the United States government to refrain from supporting elections in Haiti without safeguards to ensure they are free, safe, and fair. The planned April elections will almost certainly fall short of those standards.

Amid this political crisis and the global pandemic, deportations to Haiti from the United States have continued, causing an outcry among immigrant advocacy groups. At least 600 asylum seekers from Haiti have been deported back to the country since the beginning of February. Their deportations were permitted under Title 42, a Center for Disease Control health order that allows for rapid deportations during a health crisis. President Biden's executive order putting a 100-day moratorium on deportations does not apply to expulsions under Title 42. The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns joined other faith-based organizations in issuing a letter calling on the Biden administration to immediately halt deportations to Haiti in light of the growing crisis in the country and the risk of COVID-19 spread in Haitian communities following the deportees' return.

Abby Belt, a Maryknoll Lay Missioner working in a school in Gros Morne, Haiti, wrote a reflection on the growing crisis, published February 8: “A strong majority of Haitian citizens and political analysts agree that Moïse leaving is the best option. What comes next — because neither the president nor the opposition have any intention of backing down — will likely be more protests, school closings, roadblocks, violence and suffering for the Haitian people.”

“In holding on to hope in the ways we can, and as we have with every prior period of insecurity,” Abby continues, “we take it day by day. We had 12 students and only a handful of teachers show up for school today at Jesus Mary School...If you have a moment, breathe a silent prayer for all the Haitian mothers who worry over their children's future and safety, while keeping a smiling face outward. We rise or fall together in this world, and we cannot forget one another as we press ever onward.” §

Faith in action: Urge President Biden to immediately halt all deportations to Haiti during this time of crisis. <http://bit.ly/3schIBK>

Biden Quickly Begins Immigration Reforms

Since coming into office on January 20, President Biden has taken significant steps to enact his policy agenda on immigration.

In his first weeks in office, President Joe Biden has taken quick action on immigration: rescinding the Muslim travel ban, strengthening protections for DACA recipients, dramatically raising the ceiling for refugee admissions, and taking first steps to reform the U.S. asylum system. These actions have been generally lauded by immigrants and advocates, but some worry reforms are not happening fast enough to address the suffering facing immigrants, especially at the border.

Some of President Biden's first actions have focused on addressing border policy. To the relief of many, he quickly rescinded the zero tolerance policies enacted in 2018 by President Trump that resulted in the separation of approximately 5000 immigrant children from their parents. He followed this by issuing an executive order to initiate a taskforce focused on reuniting the approximately 600 remaining separated children with their parents.

The president also began to tackle the challenge of the infamous Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP) policy, also known as "Remain in Mexico," which since 2018 has forced migrants and asylum seekers to wait in dangerous conditions on the Mexico side of the border while their cases are being processed in the United States. The large number of migrants still waiting in Mexico for processing poses a great logistical challenge to the new Administration.

On January 26, President Biden ended new enrollments to MPP, and on February 12 the Administration announced that it would start admitting and processing small numbers of migrants who have been waiting in Mexico under the program, with the idea that numbers will ramp up as processing capacity increases.

This move was welcomed warmly by Catholic immigrant social service agencies along the border. "It gives us immense hope that President Biden has announced to begin processing asylum seekers with open MPP cases, something that should happen swiftly because the wait has already taken its toll," the Kino Border Initiative (KBI) in Nogales, Arizona tweeted.

A week earlier, KBI joined a handful of other Catholic service organizations and Catholic bishops representing the border region in sending a letter to the Biden administration expressing their hopes for immigration reform and immediate steps to address the systemic problems at the border, including through quickly ending MPP.

Catholic immigration agencies at the border stated that they will cooperate closely with the government to receive migrants as they are allowed into the United

States. Ruben Garcia, director of Annunciation House in El Paso, announced that his organization will help provide hospitality for MPP releases in El Paso, about 25 per day at first. The U.S. government has pledged to work with non-governmental organizations to identify the most vulnerable migrants waiting in Mexico and allow them to enter the United States first.

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) will help with registering and testing migrants for COVID-19 before entry. About 8,600 migrants have been registered so far. "The process is very well organized and thought out," said Melissa Lopez, director of Diocesan Migration and Refugee services in El Paso, in a press conference on Feb. 25.

While the MPP program is winding down, advocates along the border as well as 60 Members of Congress are also calling for an immediate end to Title 42, a Center for Disease Control health order that allows immigration officials to rapidly deport migrants who cross the border during the national health crisis. Dylan Corbett, director of the Hope Border Institute, tweeted that even while the MPP or "Remain in Mexico" program is ended, "At a certain point, Title 42 will become Remain in Mexico by another name," given the number of expulsions to Mexico which continue to occur under this policy.

The Biden administration has signaled that much more is to come regarding its agenda to enact broad immigration reform. President Biden sent an ambitious bill to Congress on January 20, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, that, among other things, aims to provide an earned path to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented U.S. residents, reinvigorate the asylum system, prioritize family-based immigration, and reform border enforcement.

While some are pushing for the Administration to move faster, overall advocates are expressing relief and hope with the new Administration. Maryknoll Sisters Pat Edmiston and Ann Hayden, who work with immigrants at the U.S.-Mexico border, commented, "Under the Biden administration we expect that asylum seekers will be treated with dignity and respect... We are filled with hope, and continued prayer, for those who wait to hold their children again and for those who wait for safety on our doorstep." §

Faith in action: To address a root cause of migration, contact your Senator to Co-sponsor the Honduras Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Act of 2021:

<http://bit.ly/2ZTnsUZ>

Nuclear Arms Treaties in the Biden Era

President Biden has several critical opportunities to address the threat of nuclear weapons.

As President Biden begins his term, nuclear weapons remain one of the gravest threats facing the new Administration and the world. On January 27, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced that the Doomsday Clock will remain at 100 seconds to midnight, signifying the seriousness of the nuclear threat. The symbolic clock's hands move further or closer to midnight, representing the apocalypse, according to an annual global threat analysis by a board of experts which includes 13 Nobel laureates.

The clock was first set to 100 seconds to midnight – closer than ever before, including at the height of the Cold War – in 2020. While the board points to some small positive advances in the last year, it notes that failure to adequately confront the COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed and heightened dire concerns about the technological spread of misinformation and science denialism and a general breakdown in international cooperation, all of which hinder humanity's ability to address the twin existential threats of climate change and nuclear weapons.

At the same time, the first days of the new Biden administration brought multiple opportunities to begin addressing these threats. Already, President Biden has demonstrated a willingness to reengage in multilateral cooperation by rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement and the World Health Organization, and by renewing the New START nuclear treaty with Russia. This treaty is the cornerstone of mutually verified arms control between the world's two largest nuclear powers.

The previous administration had indicated it would not renew the treaty, which would likely have resulted in a costly and dangerous arms race, diverting massive financial resources away from efforts to contain the pandemic and meet other human and environmental needs. The treaty does not reduce nuclear weapons, but it verifiably caps their number, and establishes a foundation on which to build further negotiations.

Also quickly following President Biden's inauguration, on January 21, the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) entered into force, making nuclear weapons illegal worldwide. The Holy See was among the first of fifty-four UN member states to ratify the treaty.

The world's nine nuclear powers, including the United States, have thus far refused to sign the TPNW, claiming that it therefore has no claim upon them under

international law. But, in a briefing paper on the TPNW and New START, the Noble Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), of which MOGC is a partner, argues, "With the TPNW in force, there is a new international standard. Russia, the United States and all nuclear-armed nations must take active steps to move towards compliance with this international treaty and join it."

The next crucial step the Biden administration could take on nuclear policy would be to rejoin and salvage the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran nuclear deal, which seeks to prevent nuclear weapons production in Iran. When the deal was brokered in 2015, the Catholic Church – including the Vatican, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, MOGC, and many other Catholic organizations – joined then-Vice President Biden in advocating for its adoption.

The Church condemned President Trump's decision in 2018 to leave the agreement and unilaterally impose crippling sanctions on Iran. After remaining in full compliance with the Obama-era agreement for a year under U.S. sanctions were put in place, Iran has taken several limited steps to ramp up its nuclear program since 2019, in violation of the agreement, but in a clear effort to pressure the United States to rejoin. The Biden Administration has also expressed a desire to see the deal restored but insists that Iran must come back into full compliance with the original deal before sanctions are lifted, while Iran insists sanctions be lifted first.

While the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has remained silent on the current stalemate, MOGC and 26 other national Catholic organizations have sent a letter to President Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken urging the United States to lift sanctions as a show of good faith that will help us progress toward renewing the deal. The letter outlines the moral and strategic arguments in favor of this crucial first step toward salvaging the Iran deal, which we believe will move the world toward nuclear non-proliferation and, ultimately, nuclear abolition. §

Faith in action: Sign a petition asking the Biden administration to rejoin the Iran nuclear deal. Invite Catholics to sign petition urging President Biden to offer sanctions relief as first step and show of good faith to bring Iran back to negotiating table. <https://bit.ly/3smJNq4>

Iran Nuclear Deal Petition

MOGC and Pax Christi USA are collecting signatures for the following petition. Read more about it on the previous page.

Dear Mr. President,

We write you today as fellow Catholics to thank you for your commitment to re-engaging with the international community, your renewal of New START and rejoining the Paris accord, and to urge you to take the first steps toward rejoining the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The Catholic Church has been a strong voice of support for the JCPOA, and joined you in condemning President Trump's decision to withdraw from it. Today, we believe it is urgent that the United States offer sanction relief as an initial show of good faith to bring Iran back to the table.

Iran was in compliance with the JCPOA when President Trump broke the deal by re-imposing sanctions. In doing so, he damaged the credibility of the United States with Iran and with our allies. You cannot now leverage that mistrust, especially in an election year for Iran, when hardliners are using U.S. noncompliance to discourage further negotiations.

“Maximum Pressure” sanctions have failed: since they were imposed, Iran has taken increased steps toward developing nuclear weapons, including halting short-notice inspections this week. While technically exempting medical and other civilian necessities, the freezing effect of sanctions on banking, currency exchange, and other financial activity in Iran make the procurement of crucial medicines and supplies effectively impossible. With elections looming and the COVID-19 pandemic at crisis levels, moderate forces in the country cannot afford to come back into compliance before the U.S. lifts sanctions.

While Catholic leaders have criticized the Maximum Pressure campaign and many of us have serious concerns about the impact of any sanctions regime on civilians, the fact is that sanctions relief can come with clear conditions. Iran has stated that they will come back into full compliance “within an hour” of the U.S. lifting sanctions. If they do not comply within a short, clear, realistic timeline, you could easily impose more humane, targeted sanctions. This would force Iran to “own” the measure, as it would be a direct result of their own failure and not Donald Trump's unilateral decision to break the deal.

Catholic voices have praised the Iran Deal as a model of multilateral dialogue and cooperation. We support your efforts, together with our European allies, to renew negotiations with Iran. We share your concerns

about Iran's ballistic missile program, its sponsorship of terrorism, and its proxy wars in the region, just as we are concerned about the United States' own nuclear weapons, wars, arm sales, and other violent interventions in the Middle East. Pope Francis tells us, “Authentic reconciliation does not flee from conflict, but is achieved in conflict, resolving it through dialogue and open, honest and patient negotiation.” Precisely because we recognize the challenges and threats to peace straining our relationship with Iran, we stress that diplomacy is the only proven path to addressing these concerns.

The JCPOA is the platform from which to launch future negotiations on outstanding issues with Iran, but the U.S. must act first to rebuild trust. Pope Francis tells us, “any response to the threat of nuclear weapons should be collective and concerted, based on mutual trust... (I)n this endeavor we must avoid those forms of mutual recrimination and polarization which hinder dialogue rather than encourage it.” Lifting sanctions now would be a first step toward rebuilding the trust of Iran, our other partners in the JCPOA, our allies around the world, and countries such as North Korea where we seek to eliminate nuclear weapons.

The JCPOA is also an agreement with several of our closest allies. In the spirit of your commitment to cooperation and confidence-building, we urge you to take these crucial steps to salvage the Iran Deal. The window of time before the Iranian elections is short. The success of your broader foreign policy agenda and your promise to “lead by the power of our example” may depend upon this critical, immediate first step with Iran.

Mr. President, as your fellow Catholics, we share a commitment to the gospel values of nonviolence, dialogue, and reconciliation. Drawing from your own long history of public service and international diplomacy, you argued powerfully and successfully for those ideals when you led President Obama's efforts to pass the Iran Deal. We applauded your efforts then, and we implore you to demonstrate again that same strong, bold leadership: take the first step, lift sanctions on Iran, save the JCPOA, and build on it to negotiate further steps toward lasting peace.

Thank you, and may God bless you and guide you. §

Faith in action: Sign the petition online: <http://bit.ly/3smJNq4>

UN Human Rights Review of the United States

A new report highlights the international community's perspective on the United States' human rights record.

In Geneva in mid-March, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) will meet to adopt the final report on the third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States' human rights record. The report offers insight into how the global community views the United States' commitment to human rights, with member states from around the world recommending that the United States further engage in multilateral treaties and institutions, and better address key issues at home, including systemic racism, prison conditions, and gun violence.

The review system, begun by the HRC in 2006, is described by the U.S. Mission to the UN as “a process through which all UN Member States are provided the opportunity to review the human rights records of all other Member States, and themselves. Individual countries are scheduled for review every four and a half years.” This is the United States' third review.

While it was the Trump administration which participated in the review process for the report, it will fall to the Biden administration to provide a response to the draft report before it is adopted in March, and to decide how to address the 347 recommendations in the report made by UN national delegations.

Approximately 100 of the recommendations are aimed at greater U.S. engagement in international conventions and institutions. Dozens of countries urge the United States to ratify UN human rights treaties. While the United States was a leader in writing and passing the original Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it has since ratified only three of the nine “core conventions” codifying the declaration, and just two of the “optional protocols” to those conventions. Perhaps most notably, the United States is the only country in the world that has not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Various countries also recommend that the United States re-join the Paris Climate Agreement, join the International Criminal Court (ICC) and drop sanctions against it, and re-engage with the Human Rights Council itself. The Biden administration has already moved to rejoin the Paris Agreement. The United States has not indicated a willingness to join the ICC, but President Biden has asked for a review of sanctions imposed by the Trump administration on Court officials, and indicated a willingness to cooperate with the Court in “exceptional cases.”

While the United States continues to participate in the review process, it withdrew from the Human Rights

Council itself under President Trump. Under President Biden, the United States has already rejoined as an observer, and has announced that it will apply for full membership. The United States has previously criticized the HRC for including among its members some of the world's worst human rights abusers, such as China and Saudi Arabia, and for having what it calls an excessive focus on abuses by Israel against Palestinians. While the United States can veto criticism of Israel within the UN Security Council, it has no veto power at the HRC. In rejoining the Council, the United States hopes to shift the Council's focus to abuses by leftist Latin American governments in Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua.

The bulk of the recommendations in the new report focus on human rights abuses carried out by the United States. Various countries demand closure of the prison at Guantanamo Bay – something President Biden has promised, but which the Obama administration also promised and failed to deliver. Dozens of recommendations focus on domestic systemic and institutional racism. Several nations express concern over sexual and gender discrimination. Over thirty countries urge the United States to halt or abolish the death penalty – a goal for which President Biden has expressed support.

Many countries also urge measures to reduce gun violence, and to reduce violence and increase accountability in law enforcement. The use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and the sentencing of minors to life in prison without parole are also named as concerns. Many countries note the role racism plays in all aspects of the U.S. criminal justice system. Gender inequality, especially in healthcare and the workplace, is a widely shared concern. Many recommendations address discrimination, violence, detention, and mistreatment of migrants, especially family separation and child detention. A number of recommendations urge increased respect for the rights of LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous communities, and peaceful protesters.

The Universal Periodic Review report sends a clear message to the United States and the Biden Administration: the world is watching.§

Faith in action: Learn more about the first U.S. Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Commission, proposed by Rep. Barbara Lee and Sen. Corey Booker <https://www.ustrht.org/g/>

Calls for Debt Relief and Aid Grow

MOGC and partner organizations continue to push for debt relief for impoverished countries from the IMF and G20 during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and more than 215 organizations that are part of the Jubilee USA Network sent a letter to the G20 and IMF to issue \$3 trillion in global reserves, known as Special Drawing Rights (SDRs). Spanning the globe, the signers argue that SDRs will help countries suffering from the coronavirus crisis and, "send a strong signal of renewed multi-lateral coordination..."

Read the letter from the Jubilee USA Network members to the IMF and G20 here:

https://www.jubileeusa.org/jubilee_letter_g20_sdr

"For many countries, access to Special Drawing Rights is the only way to afford urgent coronavirus spending needs while avoiding a debt crisis," said Aldo Caliarì, Senior Director of Policy and Campaigns of Jubilee USA Network, one of the letter drafters and leaders of the initiative.

On Feb. 26, G20 finance ministers met on the global coronavirus crisis response and called on the International Monetary Fund for a proposal on a general allocation of SDRs. The IMF responded immediately, stating that it would propose ways to improve the transparency and accountability of their use at their Spring Meetings in April – a move to address concerns raised by the United States.

"A new and significant allocation of SDRs would bring liquidity that countries urgently need and help stabilize their economies," explained Patricia Miranda, Advocacy Coordinator of the Latin American network LATINDADD, another drafter of the letter.

Days before the G20 meeting, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Jubilee USA Network sent a letter to President Biden also urging SDRs action. The letter encouraged the U.S. to lead on a range of global pandemic response efforts, including increasing development funds and expanding debt relief. The letter sent to Biden also raised the need to put in place measures to prevent another economic crisis from happening.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns also joined a statement with a similar message to G20 nations, ahead of the G20 Finance Ministers meeting scheduled to be held on Feb. 26. Written by members of CIDSE, the Brussels-based network of Catholic social justice organizations, the letter calls for debt cancellation and financial support to the poorest countries impacted by COVID-19.

Read the statement by CIDSE calling for debt cancellation and aid here: <http://bit.ly/37T9FIL>

"As well as the tragic loss of life," the CIDSE statement reads, "COVID-19 has stretched healthcare systems in many poor countries beyond breaking point, left millions of people without jobs and livelihoods, and decimated economies. It has exacerbated existing inequalities; whereby more powerful countries can use their position and power to secure access to vaccines and support their own economic recovery. It has compounded the challenges for many countries that were struggling with the impacts of climate change.

"The immediate priority for all countries is to save lives and support livelihoods, and debt cancellation is the quickest way to finance this. In the long-term, permanent debt restructuring and new finance is needed to rebuild societies and economies that put the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people first, care for our common home, and tackle the climate crisis.

"We need to act in global solidarity as one human family, moving from a myopic focus of what is politically, financially and technically feasible, to concentrate on what is necessary to save lives and protect our planet for current and future generations.

"As Catholic Social Justice organizations we therefore call on G20 Finance Ministers to respond to the urgency of the current crisis with global cooperation, solidarity and leadership that is needed:

1. To support a new and significant issuance of \$3 trillion Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) by the IMF, that will enable all countries to respond to the current COVID-19 crisis and support a just, sustainable recovery.

2. To extend the debt moratorium through the DSSI (Debt Service Suspension Initiative) for longer (at least 4 years) and to more countries, including those climate vulnerable countries who were already struggling to respond to added pressures of climate change.

3. To ensure that private creditors – who are currently continuing to take debt payments from countries who are struggling to respond to the needs of their citizens – are compelled to participate in all debt restructuring and debt relief.

4. To support a permanent debt workout mechanism to deliver timely, comprehensive, and fair debt restructuring to all countries with a high and unsustainable debt burden, without conditionality."§

Faith in action: Visit <https://globalcovidresponse.org/> to learn more and to tell Congress to direct the U.S. Treasury to support IMF issuance of SDRs.

Next Steps for Vaccine Equity

MOGC signed onto a joint letter on Feb. 16, excerpted here, urging President Biden to prioritize just and equitable COVID-19 vaccine policy.

Dear President Biden:

We, the undersigned religious organizations, call on you during this global health crisis to take every possible step to create a just and equitable policy toward the development, manufacture, and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. We represent diverse faith communities with the shared value that the lives of each person -- young or old, all colors and genders, indigenous or migrant, laborer or CEO -- are equally beloved and that it is our responsibility to ensure the preservation and dignity of all. Our lives are intertwined, making COVID-19 vaccines accessible to all is a race to save humanity.

Our community rejoiced when your Administration rejoined the World Health Organization and pledged resources to global vaccine alliances as one of its first acts. COVID-19 is impervious to borders, wealth, or level of development, and its spread across the globe reminds us, as Pope Francis noted, that we are “all in the same boat, where one person’s problems are the problems of all.” Over a year after its emergence, the pandemic continues to rage, taking the lives of over a million people and straining human and material resources. As people of faith, we believe it is our moral responsibility to work to save all lives. As these words from the Quran remind us, “If anyone saved a life it would be as if he saved the life of the whole humanity.”

A vaccine must be distributed both equitably and timely, so that every health care and essential worker and those at highest risk of infection are inoculated first regardless of where they live in the world or the level of wealth or development of the country. Failure to do so undermines the world’s capacity to develop herd immunity against the virus. Given the inequities of global distribution thus far, even as the U.S. and other wealthy countries expand vaccinations, without a dramatic change in global manufacturing production, the pandemic will continue to rage in developing countries for years. This lack creates continued health risk for the U.S. as well as developing nations.

With this in mind, we write today to urge your Administration to undertake the following actions to remove barriers to vaccine production and equitable distribution everywhere:

- Since October 2020, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been engaged in discussions regarding whether to invoke an intellectual property rights waiver under the TRIPS Agreement for prevention, containment and treatment of COVID-19 in order to enable increased production of COVID-19 tests, treatments and vac-

cines... [It] is essential that we do not let intellectual property rights create “barriers to the timely access to affordable medical products including vaccines and medicines or to scaling-up of research, development, manufacturing and supply of medical products essential to combat COVID-19.” As a global faith community concerned about the health of vulnerable people around the world, we support this life-saving waiver.

- Our best hope rests on continued development and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines globally... Given the significant investment of U.S. taxpayer dollars to fund vaccines as well as the global crisis at hand, we implore your Administration to use existing legal authority to accelerate global vaccine manufacturing including by sharing vaccine intellectual property with qualified manufacturers around the world and meaningfully supporting efforts to build global manufacturing capacity. The U.S. can lead the way to expand production, thus overcoming scarcity, rationing, and preventable death.

- Additionally, we urge your Administration to support the issuance of \$2 trillion Special Drawing Rights at the IMF. These new SDRs are needed to help low and middle-income countries to purchase vaccines, locally produce vaccines, and revive their economies to save lives.

- Current efforts to respond to COVID-19 are reinforcing existing inequalities within and between countries. Rich countries have bought up much of the current supply of vaccines leaving little access to vaccines for developing countries. Even within wealthy nations, like the United States, the wealthy are securing vaccinations at higher rates than those struggling in poverty. Black, Brown and Indigenous communities, who are about three times more likely to endure COVID-19 related hospitalizations and almost twice as likely to die from the virus compared to white people, do not have adequate access to these lifesaving medicines... We call for just and equal distribution of available vaccines globally and nationally.

Going forward, the policies of the United States must be one of solidarity with all peoples in order to respect and promote human life and dignity. One year out, we are making progress, but we must remove barriers undermining the pace at which all get access to these lifesaving vaccines. §

Read the full letter and list of signatories here: <http://bit.ly/3dJyHro>

Myanmar: Next Steps After the Coup

Activists in Myanmar and advocates abroad push for three actions to save the democracy after the military coup on Feb. 1.

On February 1, military leaders in Myanmar, the Southeast Asian country formerly known as Burma, orchestrated a coup, arresting Noble laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and other elected officials, after their pro-democracy party won the vast majority of seats in parliament in the November election. Claiming electoral fraud and demanding a new election, the military has declared a year-long state of emergency and appointed Army General Min Aung Hlaing the country's de facto leader.

The UN Security Council failed to agree on a joint statement regarding the situation in Myanmar after China did not support it. China has the power of veto as one of five permanent members of the council. The UN's Special Envoy on Myanmar, Christine Schraner, has strongly condemned the military takeover, saying the country risks sliding back into prolonged military dictatorship, international isolation, and suppression of human rights. Amazingly, on Feb. 26, Myanmar's UN rep. Kyaw Mon Tun spoke out against the coup on Feb. 26, making a three-finger protest salute.

Since the coup, tens of thousands of people in Myanmar, including Catholics, have joined peaceful protests throughout the country. Many government workers are on strike, refusing to cooperate with the military and demanding that democracy be restored. In response, the military has ordered social media and internet blackouts, and used violence against peaceful demonstrators, with at least twenty deaths.

On Feb. 10, President Joe Biden said he will sanction the military leaders in Myanmar who directed the coup, to pressure them to relinquish power and release the coup's prisoners. Other countries have also issued export controls and targeted sanctions against Min Aung Hlaing and his top generals. Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest.

Despite controversy over the impact of sanctions in the past, some leading human rights activists on Myanmar support their use in this case. According to a Burmese-American activist working with the Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy, human rights activists met in mid-February and settled on three advocacy asks, which include targeted sanctions.

Present at these talks were Burmese activist Wai Wai Nu; Scot Marciel, former U.S. ambassador to Myanmar; Simon Billennes of the International Campaign for the Rohingya; Mark Farmaner of Burma Campaign UK; and international lawyers who worked on the legal battle for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest in 2010.

The first advocacy ask is for countries to impose

targeted sanctions on individual military leaders and the two top military conglomerates, Myanmar Economic Corp (MEC), and Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL). "The United States needs to target the entirety of the military's vast economic interests, from the multibillion-dollar jade and gemstone industry, to its significant stakes in banking, real estate and alcohol businesses," said Paul Donowitz of Global Witness.

"At the same time, the U.S. must avoid imposing broad, sectoral sanctions that were in place until 2016," Donowitz continues, "which risk disproportionately harming civilians who were already facing increased economic hardship due to the pandemic and whose situation is likely to worsen under renewed military rule." This was a concern of the human rights activists at the meetings to determine the three advocacy asks. Some suggested the United States adopt a 180-day term for targeted sanctions to monitor their impacts and make adjustments before renewal.

"Militaries tend to be more interested in extracting revenue to fund repression than in developing the economy. Time to sanction the junta's businesses," tweeted Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch. In the last week of February, the World Bank suspended withdrawals by the Myanmar junta in response to the coup and Facebook announced that it has banned Myanmar's military and military-controlled state and media entities.

More targeted sanctions might come from Congress. Sen. Ben Cardin of Maryland, author of the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act in 2019, could update the language to include targeted sanctions of the military leaders and the MEC and MEHL. Sen. Cardin and Sen. Todd Young of Indiana introduced a resolution condemning the military coup just days after it started.

The two other advocacy asks are for the UN Security Council to adopt a global arms embargo, and to make a referral to the International Criminal Court. Both are long, difficult asks because under current conditions, China would veto any such resolution, given its extensive economic and political relations with Myanmar.

The power of the ICC to prosecute may be the only thing General Min Aung Hlaing fears. In 2018, the ICC ruled that it has jurisdiction over Myanmar's forced expulsion of the Rohingya to Bangladesh as a possible crime against humanity. §

Faith in action: Urge President Biden to increase targeted sanctions against military leaders in Myanmar. <https://bit.ly/3bTr1zY>

Brazil: Bolsonaro and the COVID-19 Pandemic

David Kane, an MOGC staff member in Brazil and a returned Maryknoll Lay Missioner, explains how a new study highlights the impacts of President Bolsonaro's actions on the trajectory of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil.

A new study by researchers at the University of São Paulo and an organization called Conectas Derechos Humanos closely examines the Brazilian federal government's response to COVID-19 and concludes that the Bolsonaro administration not only failed to control the virus through "incompetence and negligence," but deliberately undermined efforts by other government officials to control it as well as strategically promoted activity that spread the virus.

The study examines hundreds of resolutions, laws, and decrees by the federal government put in place since March 2020. The researchers demonstrate how these actions led to the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in Brazil and the staggering COVID-19-related death toll of 240,000, the second highest in the world behind the United States.

President Jair Bolsonaro, a great admirer of former U.S. president Donald Trump, largely followed President Trump's lead on management of the coronavirus, from downplaying its seriousness to promoting unproven medical interventions as solutions and striving to open the economy at all costs. When it became clear early on that the Bolsonaro administration was not planning to mobilize the federal government to confront the crisis, Congress and state and municipal governments began to implement measures to contain the virus.

The report demonstrates how President Bolsonaro's response was to undermine these efforts wherever possible. When some states declared travel restrictions to and from their states, Bolsonaro declared them to be illegal. When quarantines were initiated, temporarily closing all "non-essential" work, Bolsonaro published a decree widening the definition of essential workers to include beauty salons and barber shops, sports gyms, non-specified industrial activities, and more. When Congress passed a law extending emergency relief to a list of informal workers including taxi drivers, street vendors, waiters, hairdressers, etc., Bolsonaro quickly vetoed the law. Measures to require the use of masks in public buildings or the availability of hand sanitizer were also vetoed by the president. Luckily, some of these vetoes were overturned by Congress and others declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, but many remain in effect.

Bolsonaro has also starved many entities of the resources needed to respond to the virus. His vetoes have diverted more than R\$9 billion (\$1.8 billion) away from investments in science, technology, and innovation, hampering efforts to develop a Brazilian vaccine even though

Brazil has an extensive network of laboratories capable of doing so. The National Health Council complained that more than R\$8 billion (\$1.6 billion) appropriated by Congress to fight the pandemic has not been sent to states and municipalities which are encountering shortages of basic supplies. Instead of ramping up these investments for the following year, the 2021 budget contains large cuts for the science, technology, and research sectors.

Bolsonaro's actions are thought to have directly contributed to the disproportionately high death toll within Indigenous communities. The president vetoed various attempts to protect Indigenous communities during the pandemic, including through guaranteeing access to drinking water, personal hygiene supplies, ventilators, and hospital beds.

The lack of federal action and the Administration's subterfuge of others' efforts to contain the virus led civil society organizations to take action to try and fill the gap. The Landless Workers' Movement, the largest social movement in the country, has delivered thousands of tons of food to marginalized communities and produces low-priced handmade masks and alcohol gel.

While many church gatherings have been suspended, Catholic and other denominational communities have remained active, gathering food and other donations for families most in need. Some Maryknoll missionaries working in Brazil have adapted their ministries to fit the needs of those most impacted, such as Maryknoll Sr. Efu Nyaki, who works in trauma healing and has sought to provide psychological support for those most impacted by the pandemic.

On January 26, the Ample Christian Front, an alliance of religious entities including the National Justice and Peace Commission, a part of the National Conference of Brazilian bishops, submitted a request to the House of Representatives calling for the impeachment of President Bolsonaro.

According to pastor Romi Marcia Bencke, representative of the National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil, a co-signing organization, "the principal motivation" of this request is "the total absence of initiatives by the government to diminish and contain the impacts of the pandemic."

With Bolsonaro's favored candidates winning recent elections for the leadership of both houses of Congress, it appears unlikely that this, or any of the more than 60 impeachment requests, will move forward. Bolsonaro remains unchastised, and the country remains in crisis. §

Take Action for Palestinian Refugees

The ecumenical organization Churches for Middle East Peace is calling on people to ask President Biden to restore U.S. assistance to Palestinians through the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

In 2018, the Trump administration announced its decision to cut all U.S. aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) as well as all bilateral humanitarian assistance to the West Bank and Gaza. UNRWA helps administer critical services and resources such as health care, education, and emergency food assistance to Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East including in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria.

UNRWA's work is even more important now as COVID-19 greatly exacerbates the difficult conditions that Palestinian refugees endure. Before the \$360 million dollars in U.S. funding was cut, it accounted for nearly 30 percent of UNRWA's budget.

Although UNRWA continues to operate at full capacity, even with inadequate resources, there is an urgent need for funds to sustain the delivery of essential services—and to maintain the salaries of all of its 30,000 staff members. UNRWA has expressed great concern at its ability to procure said funds without the immediate assistance of the Biden administration.

President Joe Biden affirmed his support for the restoration of “U.S. assistance programs that support economic development and humanitarian aid for the Palestinian people” in a statement from Ambassador Richard Mills at the UN Security Council on Jan. 26, but his promises of change still needs to become action.

Now more than ever, it is necessary for the United States to restore its aid to UNRWA and other bilateral assistance programs, reaffirming its commitment to the Palestinian people by providing them with much-needed

humanitarian assistance.

As the President of the United States, Joe Biden can release the funding for UNRWA and bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza at his own discretion, as it has already been appropriated by Congress. It is imperative that he hears the support of the American people for the restoration of funding to UNRWA, among many other humanitarian assistance organizations and programs, all of which provide vital aid and relief to Palestinians.

Since its creation in 1949, the United States has pledged its unyielding financial support to UNRWA, and every administration since—both Republican and Democratic—has continued American support for the organization—all with the exception of one.

With the slashing of funds to UNRWA in 2018 by President Donald Trump, the United States' longstanding commitment to the Palestinian people and the cause of humanitarianism was severely damaged, and the hardship faced by Palestinians was perpetuated, now exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the current arrangement undermines the end goal of peace, stability, and equity for Israelis, Palestinians, and all other peoples in the region.

It is necessary that President Joe Biden releases bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza as well as to UNRWA as soon as possible to help meet immediate humanitarian needs, and to bring about the United States' re-entry to the global stage as a force for positive change in the name of peace, justice, and human rights. §

Faith in action: Ask Pres. Biden to restore U.S. funding for UNRWA: <http://bit.ly/2PdmVv6>

Israel-Palestine Recommended News Articles

The following are some recent articles with updates from Israel-Palestine.

“The Two-State Solution is dead. It's time for One Democratic State” Kathryn Shihadah writes in *If Americans Knew* on Feb. 5, 2021: “The ‘two-state solution’ is no longer a viable option – if it ever was. Meet the campaign for a more just, long lasting solution: One Democratic State for Palestine and Israel.” <https://bit.ly/3pS5T23>

“B'Tselem's Historic Declaration: Israel's Open War on Its Own Civil Society” Ramzy Baroud writes in *Common Dreams* on Jan. 29, 2021: “As B'Tselem has succinctly worded it, Israel is a regime of Jewish supremacy ‘from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.’” <http://bit.ly/3uwIvL4>

“Want Israeli-Palestinian Peace? Try Confederation” Bernard Avishai and Sam Bahour write in *The New York Times* on Feb. 12, 2021: “Politicians and experts should not doubt a two-state solution. But they should finally consider a plausible version of it.” <http://nyti.ms/2Mqjxfn>

“ICC Approves Investigation Into Israel, Citing War Crimes, Proving ‘Once More It Is a Political Body’” *Harbingers Daily* published on Feb. 5, 2021: “The International Criminal Court at the Hague approved an investigation into Israel on Friday evening, citing war crimes.” Link: <http://bit.ly/3aTmApK> §

Biden's First Actions on Climate

Since day one, President Joe Biden has recommitted the United States to climate action, signaling that the United States is "back in" the fight against this gravest of threats.

On February 19, the United States formally rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement, which was hailed as a welcome first step by climate activists and world leaders. In his first weeks in office, President Joe Biden has taken a number of subsequent steps to further his agenda to robustly address climate change during his presidency.

President Biden is taking a "whole of government" approach to climate change within his Administration, in recognition of the urgency and scope of the issue. He has directed 21 federal agencies to meet on a newly established National Climate Task Force and is also expanding the purview of climate into new policy spaces, such as the National Security Council and a rumored high-level position at the U.S. Treasury.

President Biden named Gina McCarthy, former Environmental Protection Agency administrator, to the new White House Domestic Climate Policy Advisor position. John Kerry, the Obama-era Secretary of State who played an active role in the Paris Agreement negotiations, will serve as Climate Envoy, a new position. Notably, Biden, McCarthy, and Kerry are all Catholics, and Kerry and Biden in particular have expressed their approval for Pope Francis' messages calling for a multilateral approach to solving the climate crisis that responds to the urgency of the moment with a vision to protect future generations.

The president is acting quickly to reduce fossil fuel extraction, production and use. He immediately canceled the Keystone XL pipeline once again. Through an executive order, he has paused new fossil fuel extraction on public lands and review projects underway. This executive order will also cancel fossil fuel subsidies and U.S. financing of fossil fuel production abroad. As alternatives, he plans to scale up offshore wind power production and order agencies to procure "carbon pollution-free" vehicles and electricity that support "good paying jobs with the choice to join a union" for workers in the United States.

Echoing Pope Francis's concern for the Amazon, Biden has placed an emphasis on protecting the Amazon to mitigate biodiversity loss and climate change through action by U.S. development agencies. However, President Biden's plans for protecting the Amazon include the use of market-based mechanisms, or systems in which governments and the private sector can buy and sell carbon "credits" to stay within allotted carbon emissions targets. MOGC shares the concerns of Pope Francis about the use of carbon markets, as they can be abused by

wealthy governments and private interests at the expense of impoverished communities that are most vulnerable to climate change. Emissions reductions from these projects can be difficult to measure as well.

President Biden plans to work closely with Congress on climate policy. Congress has signaled that it is considering using one of the two opportunities this year to pass a budget with a simple majority to establish policies to catalyze climate action, ranging from clean energy tax credits to infrastructure projects.

Congress is expected to use the normal budget process to fund international climate programs that help communities prevent and adapt to a changing climate, including through the Green Climate Fund (GCF). The GCF has been blocked from receiving funding first by the Republican-controlled Congress under Obama and again under President Trump. The GCF is the primary financial mechanism to serve the Paris Agreement.

Based on meetings with Congressional contacts, climate advocacy groups in MOGC's network expect to see Congress introduce a number of bills to address aspects of climate change from an international lens, such as preventing illegal deforestation in the commodities supply chain, creating more support and protections for environmental and land rights defenders, and creating mechanisms for supporting climate migrants.

Biden has also committed to working on the intersections of climate and racial justice. For the first time, there will be African Americans in charge of the House Foreign Relations Committee and the appropriations subcommittee charged with approving budgets for foreign assistance. In these positions, Representatives Gregory Meeks and Barbara Lee have named climate change as a priority and expressed that they will prioritize racial equity within U.S. foreign policy. Climate change, racial and economic equity, and recovering from the global pandemic are the first key agenda items for the Biden administration and the Democratic-controlled Congress.

The Biden administration may not be able to deliver something as ambitious as the Green New Deal, especially with the razor thin Democratic majority in Congress, but the next two years offer the best opportunity yet for making real progress to tackle the climate crisis. §

Faith in action: Sign a petition asking Pres. Biden to reject all new fossil fuel projects, including the Line 3 tar sands pipeline. <http://bit.ly/383itFH>

Resources

- 1) Read the announcement by Pax Christi USA of the **passing of their deputy director, Sr. Dianna Ortiz, OSU**, on February 19. Sr. Dianna was a tireless advocate for torture survivors and for peace. You can also post a message in tribute of Sr. Dianna: <http://bit.ly/3kburls>
- 2) Mark your calendars for our annual **Good Friday Economic and Ecological Way of the Cross, which will be held virtually on Friday, April 2**: <http://bit.ly/3by7EMG>
- 3) Sign up to attend the **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** virtual gathering **April 18-21**, for which this year's theme is the intersection of climate and racial justice: <https://advocacydays.org/>
- 4) Pray with us this Lent! It is not too late to start using our **Lenten Reflection Guide 2021: Brothers and Sisters All**. This year's Lent Guide focuses on Pope Francis' new encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*: <https://bit.ly/Lent2021MOGC>
- 5) Explore our latest **action alerts**, including ways to take action for Haiti, on debt relief, nuclear weapons, immigration, and more: <https://maryknollogc.org/alerts>
- 6) Watch a webinar recording, "**The Role of Digital Technologies to Stop the Online Exploitation of Children**," an official virtual side event at the 59th session of the UN Commission on Social Development, organized and moderated by **Sr. Marvie Misolas, MM**: <https://youtu.be/KBvJI3e33C4>
- 7) From the Advocacy Network for Africa, read a list of policy recommendations for the new Biden administration for promoting **peace and justice on the African continent**: <https://bit.ly/3qKUbyj>
- 8) Explore a **discussion guide on *Fratelli Tutti*** from Migration and Refugee Services at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, highlighting Pope Francis' words on migration in the document: <https://bit.ly/3aAn83G>
- 9) Read this Op-Ed from leaders of Churches for Middle East Peace on how the new Biden administration can constructively work towards an **end to the conflict in Israel-Palestine**: <https://bit.ly/2NFHAaj>
- 10) Read about this new book on **water defenders in El Salvador**, "The Water Defenders: How Ordinary People Saved a Country from Corporate Greed," by Robin Broad and John Cavanaugh: <http://bit.ly/3b7vAbl>
- 11) Join a webinar on **March 4 at 10:00 a.m. EST, "The Peace Dimensions of Fratelli Tutti**," exploring what *Fratelli Tutti* contributes to the theory and praxis of peace. This event is co-sponsored by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network, the Kroc Institute, Franciscans International, and Catholic Relief Services. Register here: <http://bit.ly/2M9Fe3a>
- 12) Explore this ecumenical and interreligious guidebook on **how faith communities can implement *Laudato Si'***: <https://bit.ly/3sd0mFc>
- 13) Explore this tool from Bread for the World on how to use a **racial equity scorecard** to evaluate policy and social programs: <https://bit.ly/3uc9TxU>
- 14) Watch a **three-part presentation** on our Youtube page analyzing the encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, through the See, Judge, Act framework: bit.ly/MOGCYoutube
- 15) Attend this virtual workshop and press briefing on **March 4 at 11 a.m. EST: "Ending Nuclear Weapons Before They End Us: Opportunities Under the Biden Administration to Take Action."** This event is hosted by Back from the Brink and the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons. Register here: <http://bit.ly/2OLy2uS>
- 16) Help spread the word to Spanish-speaking communities about the release of a Spanish edition of an important book on Pope Francis by John Raymaker and Maryknoll Affiliate Gerry Grudzen, "**Papa Francisco, Conciencia del Mundo: Construyendo Puentes Necesarios en un Mundo Problemático**," or "Pope Francis: Conscience of the World: Building the Necessary Bridges in a Troubled World:" <https://amzn.to/2ZGuNY6>
- 17) Explore this new **anti-racism resource from the Archdiocese of Washington**, "Made in God's Image." You can pray, study, and act on how to work for racial justice in your community: <http://bit.ly/3k5mAG4>
- 18) As part of a Lenten campaign, sign the **Coalition of Catholic Organizations Against Human Trafficking's online petition** to press seafood companies to rid their supply chains of slave labor, and help spread the word: <http://bit.ly/2Nny0Jp>