

World Health Organization Headquarters
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva
Switzerland

March 18, 2024

Dear co-chairs, deputy co-chairs and negotiators:

As religious leaders and faith-based organizations across the world, we are writing to urge you to ensure that the Pandemic Accord that you are currently negotiating secures equity commitments to protect all populations everywhere from future pandemics.

In the four years since COVID-19 first emerged as a global threat, millions of people have lost their lives, countless families have experienced grief, and communities around the world have persevered through the unbearable. In that time, we have seen how humanity at its best can reflect the divine, with remarkable acts of kindness, charity, and ingenuity. Yet, we have also experienced the tragedy of human nature, with a pandemic response held back by greed and narrow self-interest.

The sanctity of human life often seemed forgotten in the pandemic, with the lives of people in wealthy nations appearing to be valued over those in low- or middle-income countries. A bitterly inequitable vaccine distribution protected people in the Global North but left the world's poorest to face COVID-19 unprotected for too long. Countless lives were lost unnecessarily as a result. As world leaders/negotiators, you have a moral duty to ensure that this never happens again.

We welcome the progress made towards addressing this inequity with a Pandemic Accord. As you enter the final stage of negotiations, we implore you to deliver an agreement that ensures every life is valued equally.

Your meeting commences as Muslims observe the holy month of Ramadan, engaging in charity, community, and divine reflection. When the second week of negotiations begins, Hindus will mark Holi, celebrating the triumph of good over evil. Christians will be observing lent, and you will conclude on Good Friday, as Christians reflect on the ultimate sacrifice of Christ. The text of the Pandemic Accord will be finalised during Passover, as Jews celebrate the liberation of their ancestors from bondage. And the Accord is due to be signed at the World Health Assembly, just after Buddhists celebrate Vesak, remembering the Buddha's teachings of compassion, peace, and goodwill.

Each observance has its own stories, lessons, and traditions. However, collectively, they point to a set of common principles; of compassion for all humanity, justice for the oppressed, and the triumph of love and life over injustice and death. Today, we hope that you will treat those principles as your guiding light in negotiations.

In practical terms, that means reaching an agreement that ensures that everyone, everywhere can benefit from scientific advancement; that the tools needed to fight the next pandemic are shared

equally; that the knowledge and technology needed to produce them are shared; that intellectual property barriers are removed when necessary; and that people in the Global South are treated not as mere samples for pandemic monitoring, but as equal partners in a collective endeavour towards a healthier world.

There are commendable efforts to address the structural barriers to health equity within some countries. Notably, the United States and European Union have implemented and proposed measures to overcome intellectual property rules when they pose detrimental to the health of their populations. Yet, these efforts cannot happen only in few countries. It would be a moral aberration to leave behind the countries that suffered most from these barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the world has emerged from a health crisis into an era of war and all its component horrors, it is easy to feel helpless. And yet, in the darkest days of conflict, just as in the pandemic, ordinary people have extended hands and hearts to their brothers and sisters around the world with acts of generosity, and solidarity. As those endowed with a responsibility to protect future generations, we ask you to approach your negotiations with that same spirit.

Signed,

Religious Leaders

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

Archbishop Panti Filibus Musa, PhD, OFR, Lutheran Church Of Christ in Nigeria

Rt. Rev. Dr. Joseph Paul Bvumbwe, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi

Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, President, Gakurin Seminary, Tokyo, Japan

Imam Dr. A. Rashied Omar, Associate Teaching Professor, University of Notre Dame

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice

Dr. Murray Harvey, Bishop of Grafton NSW Australia, Anglican Church of Australia

Hajj Muhammad Nii Kpakpo Addo, General Secretary, Federation of Muslim Councils, Ghana

Fran Eskin-Royer, Executive Director, National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Brigid Lawlor, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Farid Esack, Professor Emeritus, University of Johannesburg

Marie Dennis, Senior Director, Catholic Nonviolence Initiative, Pax Christi International

Sister Eileen Gannon, Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York

Fr. Dr. Jörg Alt SJ, MA, BD, Society of Jesus, Germany

Roberto Jaramillo Bernal, Secretary for Social Justice and Ecology, Society of Jesus, Colombia

Carol Rittner, RSM, Religious Sisters of Mercy of the Americas

Dr. Deirdre Mullan, Sisters of Mercy

Sr. Anne Doyle, Sisters of Mercy

Sr. Mary Ellen Fuhrman, Sisters of Mercy

Padre Patrick Clarke, Congregação do Espírito Santo (CSSp), Brazil

Fr. Timothy Mutie C. S. Sp, Kenya

Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston, Disciples Center for Public Witness

Sr. Ruth Geraets

Errami Nassreddine, Head of Muslim Chaplaincy, MigrAKTion

Sr. Nelly Chisense, Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi, Zambia
Rev. Dr. Billy Gama, Malawi Council of Churches
Rev. John T. Pawlikowski, OSM, Ph.D, Catholic Theological Union
Sr. Janet Kuciejczyk, Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, France
Sr. Rose Jochmann
Br. Rev. Sergio R. Montealegre, Diócesis Anglicana del Sureste de México
Kathleen Staudt, Professor Emerita, University Presbyterian Church
Sr. Regina Nyiva Musyimi, Health Coordinator, Catholic Archdiocese of Mombasa
Sr. Pegge Boehm, PBVM
Sr. Regina Nthenya, Sisters of St. Joseph, Kenya

Faith-based Organizations

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
ACT Alliance
American Friends Service Committee
Associacao de Jovens para Evangelizacao em Melodia (AJOPEM)
Caritas International
Caritas Europa
Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)
Catholic Diocese of Malindi Health Commission
Catholic Health Association of India, Kerala Region
Catholic Medical Mission Board, Inc.
Christian Aid
Christian Congregation Church of Mozambique
Christian Connections for International Health
Christian Council of Mozambique
Christian Hospital Association of India (CHAI)
Church World Service
Churches Action in Relief and Development
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Conscious Millennials Foundation
Conseil Shiite de France (CSF)
Council of Churches in Zambia
Federation of Indian American Christians of North America (FIACONA)
Federation of Muslim Councils, Ghana
FIACONA (Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America)
FOCUS 1000, Sierra Leone
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom Road
Gandhi Development Trust
Ghana Conference of Religions for Peace
Global Network of Rainbow Catholics
Global Network of Religions for Children
Hope Initiatives International
Inclusive and Affirming Ministries (IAM)
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)

International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV & AIDS (INERELA+)
Islamic Circle of North America, Council for Social Justice
Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+)
Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar
Jesuit Refugee Service/USA
Josgiri Hospital
Kambu Catholic Dispensary
Ladysmith Servite Sisters
Lutheran Church Of Christ in Nigeria
Lutheran Church in Guinea/West Africa
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
Missão Tabita, Mozambique
Mutito Catholic Health Center
National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA
Northwest Coalition for Responsible Investment, Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
Oasis Mozambique
Pax Christi USA
Peoples Federation for National Peace and Development (PEFENAP)
Phoenix Settlement Trust
Red Jesuita con Migrantes LAC
Religions for Peace USA
Samoa Faafafine Association (SFA), Inc.
Sierra Muslim Congress Mission
Sisterhood for Health Equality in Zambia (SHEZ)
Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary - General Administration
Sisters of the Humility of Mary
SCIAF (Caritas Scotland)
Socially Responsible Investment Coalition
Sojourners
Sukaar Welfare Organization, Pakistan
The Global Interfaith Network for People of All Sexes, Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities and Expressions
United Church of Christ
United Society Partners in the Gospel
United States Catholic Mission Association
Western Cape Province Council of Churches, Cape Town, South Africa
Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice
Women of Faith in Action