



Social Justice Secretariat

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To the leaders of the countries of the G8

Dear Presidents and Prime Ministers,

We are Jesuits who coordinate the Social Apostolate of the Society of Jesus around the world. Our work, our vocation and our desire is to accompany the great number of communities who live in poverty, deprived of their most elemental rights.

We would like to take advantage of the occasion that your meeting in Scotland provides us to address you. In this way we unite our voice to the clamor of so many citizens mobilized today throughout the world and make our humble contribution to the massive petition for you to **adopt the means necessary so that, once and for all, the poverty in which a great part of Humanity lives might pass into history.** We thus understand ourselves to be faithful to our mission to promote the justice that the faith we profess demands.

We know at first hand the consequences of poverty through our contact with those who suffer its effects. Poverty entails, basically, the privation of liberty. It provokes premature death, illiteracy, sickness, lack of capacity to participate and make oneself heard in the public sphere, helplessness in the face of the arbitrariness of government officials, violence, and fleeing to other lands. It is originated from and aggravates gender discrimination. It results in lack of access to elementary goods and services like health, water, or a secure physical environment. It implies the deprivation of the capacity to choose a life that makes us happy. As our Father General says, “poverty has always produced weakness and humiliation, and also makes difficult self-respect and the exercise of solidarity.”¹ In short, poverty dehumanizes and wounds the dignity to which every person is entitled because of being created in the image of God.

We also know that poverty is linked to a system of producing, consuming and relating to nature – a system which does not respond to the needs of all. As John Paul II reminded us, “the greatest economic problems of our time are not the result of a shortage of resources, but rather of the fact that the present economic, social and cultural structures have difficulty accommodating the demands of authentic progress.”²

Because of this, and because it is a strict obligation of justice and truth to prevent fundamental human necessities from remaining unsatisfied, and because today more than ever we know it is possible to eliminate poverty, we urge that from your position of privilege you initiate measures to:

Increase and improve the quality of international development aid, as an expression of the universal destiny of goods, of the international redistribution of riches and of the right to development of peoples.

¹Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *La opción por los pobres y la superación de la pobreza*. UCAB, Caracas, 1998.

²John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace, 2000*, p. 14.

Find a definitive and just solution to the problem of external debt, which so many countries have already paid in excess and which drain the resources necessary for the development of persons, because “in many cases, these countries are forced to reduce their outlays for vital necessities, such as food, health and education, in order to satisfy their obligations to international financial agencies and banks. This means that many people are condemned to conditions of life that are an affront to human dignity.”³

Promote a system of international trade centered on human development, taking into account that an exchange economy cannot continue relying only on the law of competition, for “free exchange is only equitable if it is submitted to the demands of social justice.”⁴

Move in the direction of international institutions that favor the development of peoples, guarantee their voice and representation and favor the redistribution of global resources. We unite ourselves thus to the call of Paul VI when he wrote, “it is necessary to have the courage to undertake a revision of the relationships between nations, whether it is a question of the international division of production, the structure of exchanges, the control of profits or the monetary system.”⁵

Set in motion in your countries models of development based on solidarity and sustainability, for the “civilization of consumption”⁶ is not the answer to human aspirations and potentialities. It does not make us more fully human, works against the ecological equilibrium of the planet and cannot give capacity to the poor, because “it is not possible to elevate poor peoples to the level of the developed. If overcoming poverty were to mean that, it would not be possible to overcome poverty.”⁷

With these measures we can begin to move toward “a world order based on genuine solidarity, where all can occupy the place to which they have a right in the banquet of the Kingdom,”⁸ and where poor people are not a problem but rather subjects and protagonists of a new and more human future for the whole world.

Together with the rest of the world’s leaders, you have committed yourselves on many occasions to travel this path. From the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992), to the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (2002); from the Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen (1995), to the Millennium Summit in New York (2000), there are many commitments that have yet to be fulfilled.

Now is the time to keep your word, as your own citizens are demanding. At stake are the basic rights of many people, and with them the dignity of the whole human race.

Fernando Franco sj, Social Justice Secretary of the Society of Jesus; **Andreas Gösele sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Central Europe; **Antoine Berilengar sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Africa and Madagascar; **Javier Arellano Yanguas sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Southern Europe; **Jim Stormes sj**, Coordinator for Social and International Ministries of US Jesuit Conference; **Jorge Julio Mejía sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Latin America; **Rafael Moreno sj**, Assistant to the Social Apostolate Coordinator for Latin America; **Paulo Sergio Vaillant sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Brasil; **Antoine Kerhuel sj**, On behalf of the Social Apostolate in

³John Paul II, *The Church in Asia*, 40.

⁴Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, n.59.

⁵Paul VI, *Octogésima Adveniens*, n.43.

⁶John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 28.

⁷Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, *op.cit.*

⁸Society of Jesus, *General Congregation XXXIV*, D.3, p. 17.

Western Europe; **Jakub Cebula sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for Eastern Europe; **Paul Dass sj**, Social Apostolate Coordinator for East Asia - Oceania; **Joe Xavier sj**, Secretary of Jesuits in Social Action (JESA) – Southern Asia.

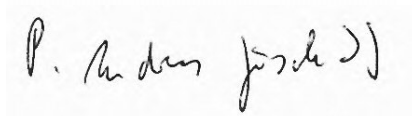
Fernando Franco sj

Social Justice Secretary of the Society of Jesus



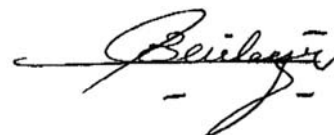
Andreas Gösele sj

Social Apostolate Coordinator for Central Europe



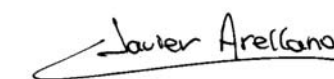
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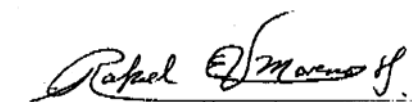
Jorge Julio Mejía sj

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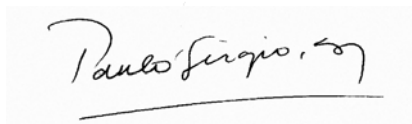
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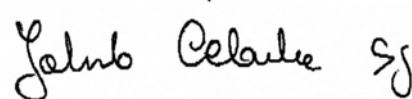
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