



## DEMOCRACIES IN CRISIS: JOINING VOICES FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE CIDSE DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

Brussels, 8 May 2024

***Within less than two years, all of CIDSE member organisations and their supporters will have the opportunity to participate in elections. United by a resounding commitment to social and climate justice, CIDSE's directors extend an invitation to all inhabitants of "our common home" to demonstrate responsibility, solidarity, and hope at the polls in the forthcoming months.***

This year more than half of the world's population will see political elections whose outcomes are likely to shape the trajectory of many countries and entire regions for years to come.

In a world where geopolitical interests lead to violence and war, where democratic systems are torpedoed and weakened by the rise of extremism and where, despite the ecological urgency, too little is being done with courage to consistently accompany society and the economic system in a process of transformation, we, the directors of the Catholic social justice organisations gathered as CIDSE, together with the communities we work with, raise our voices and call on citizens to reflect on what is at stake in these various elections around the world:

*How much longer will we, as a human family, tolerate an unfair global control, production, and distribution of power and wealth? When will there be an end to this system dominated by few, corporations and private interests that value profit over life?*

*Is there a limit to the imperative of economic growth? How long will the loss of biodiversity caused by human beings living beyond planetary boundaries continue to be ignored?*

Too often we are told that there are no alternatives to the extractivist growth paradigm. But we hear a different story from our partners in the Global South: another way of living together is not only possible but urgently needed. Those who suffer the most and face the multiple failures of the current economic, social and political model have the right to influence and play a role in the directions we must take together. We find glimmers of hope in the joint work we witness with partners and communities who are leading us towards a future of greater solidarity, justice, and peace. We stand with them in opposing a world where global indifference and a throwaway culture are rooted in and growing as societal norms. Seeing this world as possible requires us to think and act in new and radical ways.

Voting is a right, a privilege and collective responsibility to our communities and to caring for our common home. The interconnected crises we face require an integrated response to achieve change.

We, therefore, urge those who have the right to vote to fulfil it, engaged and conscious of the complex realities we face. And we call on political leaders to:

- Challenge systems of power that maintain and reproduce existing gender inequalities, through a decolonial feminist lens;
- Support laws that reflect genuine multilateralism aiming to transform the economic and political systems;
- Promote international humanitarian and human rights law as well as their defenders, requiring governments and international bodies to adopt, respect and enforce binding rules to end impunity;
- Decolonise our systems of power by listening to and supporting communities and organisations in the Global South in their struggle for justice and dignity;
- Defend climate and biodiversity justice and reject false or techno-fix solutions.

In Pope Francis' encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, all are called to a new universal solidarity. We all have the responsibility to act. Despite the many threats to democracy: such as manipulation, shrinking space for civil society and media, as well as insecurity in some countries, there is real hope in new citizen engagement. This is especially true among the young, when we think that some 16-year-olds will be able to vote for the first time during the European elections.

In Europe, as elsewhere in the world, we call on all citizens to stand up for justice, to promote the common good and to protect the rights of all, especially the most marginalised, silenced and vulnerable voices of our human family, and we call on politicians to listen.

#### List of signatories:

- Lieve Herijgers, Broederlijk Delen, Belgium
- Christine Allen, CAFOD, England & Wales
- Inès Minin, CCFD–Terre Solidaire, France
- Josianne Gauthier, CIDSE, International
- Heleen Van den Berg, Cordaid, Netherlands
- Carl Héту, Development & Peace, Canada
- Axelle Fischer, Entraide et Fraternité, Belgium
- Daniel Fiala, eRko, Slovakia
- Bernd Nilles, Fastenaktion, Switzerland
- Anja Appel, KOO, Austria
- Jorge Libano Monteiro, FEC, Portugal
- Paolo Chesani, Focsiv–Volontari nel Mondo, Italy
- Ricardo Loy, Manos Unidas, Spain
- Susan Gunn, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA
- Pirmin Spiegel, MISEREOR, Germany
- Denise Richard, Partage Lu, Luxembourg
- Lorraine Currie, SCIAF, Scotland
- Caoimhe de Barra, Trócaire, Ireland
- Marc Bollerman, Vastenactie, Netherlands