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Press Statement:

Our Life after the Pandemic must not be a Replica of Life before it¹

As a network of religious women and men who have missionaries working in the remotest villages in Africa, AEFJN has firsthand information and experiences of the poorest in this beautiful continent. By virtue of our call to walk in the footsteps of Jesus to bring the good news to them, we are very attentive to the *“cry of the poor and cry of the earth”*² in Africa and we speak convincingly out of the abundance of our experience (Prob. 4:23) for Africa in the face of COVID-19. At this time of Covid-19 pandemic, we have not just widely and vividly experienced our interconnectedness and vulnerability but the pandemic has further exposed the fault-lines of our economic system, unsettled every dimension of life and left the future most unpredictable for Africa. The pandemic is yet to reach its peak in Africa; however, the disproportionate imminent consequences and predictions keep the world on the edge.

The economic impact of the global health crisis should not be underestimated. In fact, the Covid-19, among its side effects, has triggered a dramatic recessive push on the African economy. The collapse of tourism and exports as a result of the closure of borders, the volatility on the international financial markets of the price of commodities, oil first and foremost, have brought the African national economies to their knees. According to the World Bank³, there are all the conditions for an imminent food crisis. There are forecasts of a contraction in Africa’s agricultural production of between 2.6% and 7% following, above all, the trade blockages and the plague of locusts that are infesting many countries, especially on the eastern side of the continent. The World Bank has also hypothesized that as a result of the pandemic the economic growth of Sub-

1 Pope Francis, *“Life after the Pandemic”*. Libreria Editrice Vatican, May 2020

2 Pope Francis, *“Laudato Si 49”*

3 World bank, *“COVID-19 Corona virus) Drives Sub-saharan Africa Towards First Recession in 25 Years, 9th April, 2020.*

Saharan Africa could contract from "+2.4% in 2019 to -2.1% in 2020", specifying that it would be the "first recession in the last 25 years"⁴.

Therefore, we call for a global post COVID just recovery that will be inclusive but not limited to

- a sustainable food system,

- cancellation of Africa's debt burden and

- just energy transitions

in the ongoing trade and investment negotiations between the EU and the Organization of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).

In the same vein, **we call upon the EU and the African leaders to support the ongoing discussion on UN Treaty for the regulation of Trans-national Corporations.** It is the most concrete and practical way of facilitating Africa's just recovery from the ashes of the pandemic.

The global community has demonstrated that it has the capacity to act and live differently. It is now an opportunity to translate those beautiful traits into a permanent resolve and solidarity to cope with larger and longer-term threats⁵. We must courageously think outside the box and embrace the path that leads to a civilization of love. The opportunity to venture out on new paths and propose innovative solutions⁶ to global problems that promote our shared humanity must not be lost.

André Classens MSC

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⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid