

To Herald A New Era, Global Religious Leaders from all Faith Institutions and Traditions, Call for A Vaccine for All

18 DECEMBER 2020

As we near the end of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic is ravaging families and communities, shuttering nations and impeding livelihoods. While the Pandemic has revealed the deep fissures of inequality and our common human and institutional fragility, it has underlined the indisputable interconnectedness and interdependence of our existence. This Pandemic, emerging from and with the existential threat to our very planet, is challenging humanity to be united in solidarity, to demonstrate global fraternity, and to protect and nurture shared well-being.

The speed at which scientists around the world have worked on the development of vaccines for COVID-19 is unprecedented, and is a testament to the global level of urgency posed by this threat. There is now real hope that vaccines, in combination with other effective public health measures, may well help to end the pandemic. Every country needs access to a safe and effective vaccine. "Vaccine nationalism" however, can and will threaten equitable access, particularly for low-income countries.

Mindful of clarion calls for action towards the common good, reflecting together on a year of both tumultuous challenges and aspirations, and seeking to unite our efforts to serve shared well-being, *Religions for Peace's* [World Council](#) (representing institutions and communities of all religious and faith traditions, from all corners of the world), joins, affirms and raises its moral and prophetic voice to call for unprecedented global cooperation, to distribute vaccines to all people of the world, free of charge. In our interdependent world, no one is safe, unless everyone is safe. The shared moral value of all our faiths, and our common history, compel all to live this truth: that until the most vulnerable among us is safe, none amongst us, is.

We acknowledge that while everyone must ultimately be provided access to the vaccine, the unprecedented scale of the vaccine operation globally will require prioritization of health workers and the most at-risk populations. *Religions for Peace* commits to supporting community-level understanding, patience and informed uptake of the vaccine, while continuing to sustain and endorse ongoing prevention efforts.

We urge the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), partners and national governments to work together transparently to fund and coordinate vaccine production, allocation and distribution – including the use of global, multilateral mechanisms, such as the [COVAX](#) Facility – to guarantee rapid, fair, affordable and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide particularly for low-income countries. Other mechanisms such as the WHO COVID-19 Technology Access Pool could also be strengthened to serve as a mechanism for companies to obtain licenses to produce the vaccines without having to negotiate separate deals with multiple patent or technology holders.



This is not the time for private sector interests to be placed above public health objectives. Nor is it the time for national governments to “opt-out” of global mechanisms and initiatives, which seek to share the responsibility of saving lives and promoting health for all. Access to vaccines and treatments as global public health goods is in the interest of all humanity. While the world waits for a safe and effective vaccine to reach all people, we urge all stakeholders to continue the essential public health actions to suppress transmission and reduce mortality.

We also acknowledge the significant damage that misinformation and rumour-mongering can have on people’s health and the pandemic response, as we recognize that all our institutions have a role to play in ensuring accurate information is accessible to all. We pledge our support to efforts to ensure that people have accurate and timely information, and to facilitate community feedback, in order to help inform the vaccine roll-out strategy and messaging.

Let us seek to usher in a new year of solidarity with actions that promote the common health of mind, spirit and body. Let us begin this coming year by continuing and expanding our work together, to serve all our fellow human beings, beginning with the most vulnerable among us, and leaving no one behind.