



“Shared Responsibility for the Whole Human Family” *A joint declaration towards a renewed transatlantic partnership*

On the occasion of the upcoming June 2021 EU-U.S. Summit, the world recounts the widespread outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic in March 2020 in which nearly every aspect of life was forcibly disrupted in an attempt to curb its spread. Fear and uncertainty gripped the world. Our Holy Father Pope Francis has offered support and guidance for the Church and the whole world in this extraordinary time.

Even as the pandemic seems to be receding in some nations, it is still hitting others in the world very hard. On both sides of the Atlantic, it has also caused deep wounds and exposed our vulnerabilities. Many people and many families continue to live in a time of uncertainty because of socio-economic problems, affecting particularly the poor. This pandemic has highlighted the inter-connected nature of today’s challenges, in their origins as well as effects. Global challenges require global solidarity and global responsibilities while also empowering the subsidiarity of local communities and persons.

Shared values and principles of freedom, democracy, rights of nations, the rule of law, justice, and respect for human life, have been the foundation of the relations between the European Union and the United States of America. It is this shared commitment to the promotion of global peace, justice, and human development that makes the EU and the U.S. natural partners in steering multilateral efforts for [*“healing the world that was sick”*](#). We wish to support the Holy Father's encouragement of decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic *“to seize this time of trial as a time of choosing”*. In this respect, the Catholic Church looks to the EU-U.S. Summit with hope that it may be a stepping-stone for a renewed transatlantic partnership at the service of a people-centered and just recovery from the pandemic and its consequences, intensifying common efforts for a more peaceful world, and strengthening our commitment to a better care for our common home.

For a people-centered and just recovery

With COVID-19 vaccines being administered in our countries, we can increasingly see a light at the end of the tunnel. But as our nations gradually begin recovery, we wish to recall the principles of human dignity and a preferential option for the poor which imply that the most affected and vulnerable people and families should be placed at the center of efforts providing adequate healthcare and socio-economic support. Populations in most of the countries in the world are still struggling with high transmission rates of the virus, overwhelmed health care systems, and still far away from the prospect of a post-pandemic world. While commending the gestures of global solidarity demonstrated in concrete assistance provided by our nations to suffering regions, we encourage European and U.S. decision-makers to accelerate their efforts,

including through the COVAX Facility, to ensure an equitable access to vaccines for all, especially the most poor and vulnerable.

Learning the lessons from the last financial and economic crisis which led to a slow and uneven recovery, we urge that the renewed transatlantic partnership work to strengthen employment in dignified conditions, including among small and medium-sized enterprises. It has also become increasingly urgent to tackle “*structures of financial sins*” that allow tax evasion and other tax offenses, to ensure that everyone contributes to the common good and to a just recovery. In this respect, we hope that the EU and the U.S. can spur multilateral cooperation to find a global solution on a fair digital taxation to increase solidarity and mutual trust in our economies.

With about 15 million jobs on both sides of the Atlantic depending on a close economic transatlantic partnership, we encourage European and U.S. decision-makers to build upon free trade and investment initiatives in view of creating opportunities for human development and socio-economic empowerment of the citizens of our respective nations as well as globally. In this regard, we recall what European and U.S. bishops [stated](#) already in 2016: “*Trade policies must be grounded in people-centered ethical criteria, in pursuit of the common good for our nations and for all people around the world. The negotiation or implementation of trade agreements must abide by principles which promote and defend human life and dignity, protect the environment and public health, and promote justice and peace in our world.*” An increased transatlantic economic integration may also stimulate a rethinking of the global economic system, going beyond mere profit maximization and ensuring the preservation of the environment and sustainable human development. Moreover, joint EU-U.S. efforts could be intensified with regard to providing assistance to poorer nations that often lack sufficient technical knowledge or resources to address poverty, hunger, corruption and other injustices. This may include the support for efforts to reduce the burden of external debt held by poorer countries and promote a new model of development cooperation, which increases self-reliance and allows inclusive participation in political and economic decision-making process, while respecting the life, religion, culture, and values of local communities.

For a more peaceful world

In his recent encyclical on fraternity and social friendship, [Fratelli tutti](#), Pope Francis reminds us that “*a real and lasting peace will only be possible on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family*”. In the face of today’s manifold challenges to peace and their root causes, we encourage the EU and the U.S. to be beacons of trust across the global community and engines for a reinvigoration of multilateral cooperation. When our decision-makers act in a productive way, they can be more persuasive in convincing other nations to develop their own joint approaches within multilateral institutions at the service of the common good. In this regard, we hope for an active transatlantic engagement in the greater coherence of international organizations, such as the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, to make sure that their structures and procedures are more effective in addressing the challenges of today and of the future.

Our Church shares an understanding of peace that goes beyond a mere absence of war and violence, but which above all requires the establishment of an order which is based on justice, on integral human development, on respect for fundamental human rights, and on the care for creation. May these principles inspire and guide the transatlantic engagement in the promotion of peaceful resolution of the many violent conflicts and instabilities in the world, including in the Middle East, while making more resources available for multi-stakeholder dialogue, preventive diplomacy, and non-violent action at an early stage. Reiterating Pope Francis' [call for](#) a global ceasefire, we urge our decision-makers to increase their engagement for enhancing arms exports control and stopping illicit arms trade. As European and U.S. bishops have [repeatedly stated](#), a stronger transatlantic commitment to arms control, including nuclear disarmament, is becoming more urgent than ever in the light of the recent geopolitical, legal and technological developments. Inspired by the leadership of the Holy See in ratifying the key legal instruments of the global arms control architecture, we call on European and U.S. decision-makers and other security actors to foster mutual trust and seek unity through dialogue in view of promoting and taking ambitious steps towards a world one day free from nuclear weapons.

With spreading digitalization and technological advances and their manifold security implications, defining a framework for using technology, putting it at the service of a different kind of progress which is more human, social, and sustainable is critical. The EU and the U.S. must be frontrunners in promoting global standards for a human-centric and ethical development and use of modern technologies, including artificial intelligence, in ways that care for the environment and the people it must sustain.

We also wish to appeal to European and U.S. decision-makers to intensify their joint efforts in the protection of the fundamental right to religious freedom which is a core value of the transatlantic partnership yet continues to be threatened in many parts of the world. As highlighted by the International Theological Commission in its document [For the Good of All: Theological Approaches and Contemporary Challenges](#), such efforts should be oriented towards the promotion of a "*positive laicity*" in the relationship between the public and religious space, such that religion may "*participat[e] in the reflections of the public sphere in the contribution of reasons for the common good.*"

Violent conflicts are among the major causes forcing people to leave their homelands. Our Church has long defended the right of people to migrate when conditions in their home countries are unsafe or prevent them from providing for themselves and their families. While urging decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic to assume their responsibility in making effective the primary right of people to remain in their home country to live in security and dignity, we also wish to underscore Pope Francis' [meaningful call](#) to ensure humane and dignified treatment of our sisters and brothers forcibly on the move: welcome, protect, promote, and integrate.

For a better care of our common home

"We were not shaken awake by wars or injustice across the world, nor did we listen to the cry of the poor or of our ailing planet", Pope Francis [reminded us](#) in the wake of the pandemic. Hearing the cry

of the earth and the cry of the poor, the COVID-19 crisis has shown us the fragility and interdependence of our ecosystem. We encourage the future transatlantic partnership to be based on the concept of integral ecology as outlined in *Laudato Si'*, which includes the challenge to address climate change as an opportunity to improve general living conditions, health, transport, energy, and security, and to create new job opportunities.

An important element of promoting an ecological transition and just economy is demanding that businesses map their supply chains in order to help prevent, mitigate, and account for human rights violations and negative environmental impacts of their activities. Following up on national and regional initiatives, we urge EU and U.S. decision-makers to also play a constructive role in the on-going negotiations for a UN Binding Treaty on Business & Human Rights.

Even though the transatlantic partnership is based on a solid foundation of common principles and values, it needs to be nurtured continuously to make it even more fruitful and mutually beneficial not only for our citizens, but to also at the service of the whole human family. The Church on both sides of the Atlantic stands ready to support these noble efforts of our decision-makers. Ahead of the upcoming EU-U.S. Summit, we pray that the participants be guided by wisdom and mutual trust to lay the basis for a renewed transatlantic partnership for greater peace, justice and sustainable human development across our Continents and in the world.

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For the Bishops
of the European Union:

Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich SJ
*President of the Commission of the Bishops'
Conferences of the EU (COMECE)*
19 Square de Meeûs | 1050 Brussels (BELGIUM)
Tel. +32 2 235 05 10 | Website: www.comece.eu

For the Bishops
of the United States of America:

Archbishop José H. Gomez
*President of the United States Conference of
Catholic Bishops (USCCB)*
3211 Fourth Street NE | Washington DC 20017 (USA)
Tel. +1 202-541-3000 | Website: www.usccb.org