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MESSAGE TO PAX CHRISTI INTERNATIONAL ON ITS 70th ANNIVERSARY

On the occasion of your Global Assembly, to be held in Bethlehem from May 13-17, the leaders of the International Peace Bureau network wish to convey our congratulations and deep admiration for the work you have carried out over seven decades, and continue to do today, for a world of peace and justice.

The founding of the Pax Christi movement in 1945 was one of many signs that civil society was determined to build a new world following the immense destruction of World War Two. There was a need to heal the wounds and put an end to the hatreds which had both led to the war and emerged from it. There was a need to affirm human rights and to put an end to mass poverty. And there was an urgency to demand bold steps towards disarmament – especially as it became clear in the late 1940s and 1950s that a new and far more deadly arms race was under way.

In all these areas Pax Christi has risen to the challenge and fulfilled its early promise. From 1970 onwards, you managed to sustain a dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church, at the same time as cooperating with dissidents and emerging civil society groups in Poland, the Czech Republic and the German Democratic Republic, all of whom played an important role in the changes that ended the Cold War.

You have supported human rights defenders in many regions, both North and South, and at the grassroots as well as at the United Nations Human Rights Council. You and your members continue to work courageously in extremely difficult circumstances for the nonviolent transformation of conflict in many of the world's areas of tension.

In recent years International Peace Bureau and Pax Christi International have developed a specific partnership in making the case for investing in sustainable development rather than the overwhelming and misguided militarism we see all over the world. We are delighted with the excellent cooperation we have with Pax Christi International on this and other issues. In this respect, we look forward to working together with you on the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the outcomes of the COP 21 climate change conference later this year.

Indeed, we both share a broad vision of a world without war, as well as deep concerns as to the armed conflicts and confrontations we see today in many regions. As we know, peace-making is not only a matter of treaties and peace agreements; we have to find ways to demilitarize the minds of decision-makers and citizens in all countries. In this we share a particular understanding with both faith-based and secular groups: that religion and ideology can be a powerful promoter of peace, but also sometimes a force that divides communities and that stirs up violent conflict.

The deep spirituality of nonviolence is one that links our two networks. In essence we can say we share respect for the Golden Rule: 'To do unto others as you would like them to do unto you'.

Let us go forward together on the peace road, reaching out to others as we progress towards a world of economic and social justice and sustainable peace.
