

## **ACT Alliance public statement on Latin America and the Caribbean**

Members and forums of the ACT Alliance in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), concerned about the huge contradictions between, on the one hand, humanity's great aspirations for a better world, reflected in the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, and on the other hand, the realities that point towards a trend of deepening inequalities based on economic systems that exploit nature in a disproportionate way, expose us to unmanageable climate change and legitimize political systems that degrade human rights.

We are facing a new era in which at least two models for the future are confronting each other – one exclusive and the other inclusive. As ACT Latin America and the Caribbean, we oppose the dominant global project of exclusion to define our future, which benefits the few that appropriate wealth and excludes the vast majority of society from those benefits, producing the most shameful and scandalous inequity on a planet that is capable of welcoming us all in dignity.

We proposed and back an inclusion project that generates a dignified and full life for humanity and nature, accompanying both with viable, sustainable and concrete proposals from our Faith in Action, in which the technologies and systems of production, distribution and consumption ensure a healthy Oikos that puts people at the centre of sustainable development.

ACT Alliance calls for a joint action of FBOs, civil society and other stakeholders that want an inclusive world:

**We promote the Rule of Law and governance, based on respect for democratic institutions.** Fundamental rights of people and of nature must prevail, and situations of structural violence must be overcome, as the criminalization and prosecution of human rights defenders, who in addition to facing systematic defamation, disqualification, threats, physical and psychological attacks, now also increasingly face criminal proceedings and other forms of judicial harassment, which is one of the most harmful consequences of shrinking civil society space. In Colombia more than 350 human rights defenders and social leaders have been killed, and conflict has intensified in territories in the grip of armed actors and illegal economies, where the current peace agreement is not implemented. In Honduras, there is systematic persecution of human rights defenders and environmentalists with more than 115 murdered, and continuing impunity because of the government's lack of will. In LAC we are also witnessing coups d'état, setbacks in democratic systems, and the dismantling of advancements made in social rights. In Guatemala, the main anti-corruption body, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), is facing dismantlement by the powers that be.

We want to contribute to overcoming institutional crises, lack of democratic governance, the suppression of public protests, the imprisonment and political killings of social leaders and symptoms of social regression such as those in Brazil, which have frozen social spending for 20 years. We want to promote peace based on respect for all human beings and social rights, and not terror and social violence, such as in Nicaragua. We want to support actions to overcome poverty and inequity, and not structural adjustments that lead to social confrontations, with multiple victims as in Haiti, which do not solve crises or generate sustainability. We want transparency, and to expose the interests of powerful groups, illegal economies and corruption that have

infiltrated political organizations and State institutions, leading to political crises that are putting at risk the framework of Human Rights and governance and hinder the development of public policies to respond to the needs and demands of the population, such as in Peru. Finally, we want to overcome the social violence that is oppressing young people and restricting economic options for low and middle income families, without viable and effective alternatives, such as in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.

We ask ACT Alliance to maintain its support for peace processes in Colombia and to strengthen advocacy activities to the Colombian Government and the United Nations Security Council in order to ensure the verification of peace agreement implementation and promote peace dialogue between the government and the National Liberation Army.

**We promote economic justice** – the rule of law alone is not enough to overcome economic, social and political inequalities; public policies, strategies and initiatives are needed to overcome exclusion of the most vulnerable populations such as children and indigenous people, with efforts that start from the fair distribution of national resources, including fair taxation, fiscal and structural policies, but also a new global financial system that does not promote dependency, but fosters cooperation, solidarity and inclusive sustainable development that is regionally balanced. We promote an economic justice that is based on the fair distribution of wealth, including fiscal and structural policies that promote equity and poverty eradication, and that at international level promotes cooperation, sustainability, effectiveness and equity so whole regions are not abandoned due to geopolitical priorities or for being “Middle Income Countries” when there is outrageous inequity, such as in Latin America and the Caribbean. We oppose the adverse effects of structural economic adjustment on poor people, and lack of access to education, health and social security, especially pensions, as well as the greater indebtedness of governments, like Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Central America. International investment must also follow standards of sustainability respecting nature and strengthening local economic structures. In this sense we must promote a dialogue between governments, national and international private sectors and civil society.

**We demand Climate Justice** – efforts be drastically increased to fulfil the commitments under the Paris agreement, dedicating enough resources for adaptation and mitigation to fight climate change, especially for the most impoverished and vulnerable, as well as to protect our natural, social and cultural goods, to achieve the goal of not exceeding 1.5°C of global warming. The impacts of climate change are leaving us without food, without productive lands, without water sources, without coastal lines, and with higher numbers and degrees of climate induced disasters. This vulnerability is deepened by extractivism, monocultures and growth of mega cities, phenomena linked to the dominant production model. Harmful approaches to implementing mitigation and adaptation actions, for example with regard to drought, result in hunger, misery and lack of water, as in the Brazilian semi-arid region, where reductionist and fragmented government policy has generated the so-called "drought industry". As ACT, we propose integral models of climate justice to safeguard natural resources, using renewable energies, capture, storage and reuse of water; with plants resistant to drought without genetic manipulation and with public policies of coexistence with drought.

**We demand Gender Justice** – The distortion and stigmatization of the gender perspective, which the traditional and patriarchal political movements call "gender ideology", often in connivance with religious fundamentalists, is bringing about disrespect for rights and setbacks in achievements for gender equity and justice, in approaches, laws and public policies, which trivialize gender-based violence, including unprosecuted rapes and femicides, the feminization of poverty, and inadequate women’s participation in the public sphere. The education about and implementation of sexual and reproductive rights is circumvented,

causing pregnancies in adolescence and other effects that hurt young people, and are reflected in harmful laws such as family legislation in Nicaragua and El Salvador which denies basic sexual and reproductive rights, deepening vulnerabilities and lack of opportunities, which stand in the way of overcoming patriarchal and reductionist attitudes. The few rights attained so far by sexually diverse communities in the region are being seriously threatened. They are a group suffering some of the most serious attacks by fundamentalists, who target them with hate speech and other forms of exclusion that often result in violence and death. We want to promote a gender justice approach which overcomes the lack of laws that protect the population, especially women, and overcomes hate speech and actions like disinformation and defamation. We also want to ensure that sex education is provided in schools and in civil society spaces to effectively combat the distortion or elimination of gender equity, and to repeal legislation that penalizes sexual rights.

**We want justice for migrants and displaced populations**, who are expelled and uprooted from their lands by social, political and economic violence and the impact of climate change. These forced movements involve family separation, exploitation, trafficking in persons, forced labour, and statelessness, all of which undermine their human dignity and their rights as human beings. We want to contribute to the effective protection of rights for refugees and migrants, to demand that States comply with their obligations, including the right to provide access to asylum, as requested by the Caravan of Migrants currently underway from Central America to the United States. We express our solidarity with countries facing security problems and generating large movements of migrants, like Venezuela, Honduras, Guatemala, Colombia, El Salvador and Nicaragua that face immense challenges. We are also in solidarity with populations that are left stateless, due to structural social crises, such as Dominicans of Haitian origin, denying them their dignity and rights.

## **WE ARE COMMITTED**

To continue accompanying the struggles of our Communities inspired by the unconditional love of God for all, but especially those who are left behind in their aspirations to live with dignity in the midst of the contradictions and injustices thrust upon them.

We consider in this context of deep contrasts that it is necessary to focus our attention and our efforts on the accompaniment and promotion of human rights and human rights defenders, economic justice, the protection of creation, and to contribute to the strengthening of governance in local contexts suffering structural crises.