**Statement from the Global Conference on Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Guatemala City, March 27-29, 2019**

We are more than 50 representatives of 32 organizations from 21 countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, North America and Europe, gathered by [ACT Alliance](https://actalliance.org/) to discern and discuss the complex and volatile situation in Latin America and the Caribbean and its intersection with global political processes related to human rights, security, democracy, humanitarian needs and sustainable development.

ACT Alliance is an international coalition of churches and faith-based organizations that work together in humanitarian response, development work and advocacy. Together, the members have a long history of promoting social justice, human rights and sustainable development.

We see that the region of Latin America and the Caribbean faces a growing crisis with a series of serious implications, from humanitarian crises to a violent reaction against human rights and the rule of law. At the ACT Alliance General Assembly held in Uppsala, Sweden at the end of 2018, ACT members from Latin America and the Caribbean presented their commitments to act together on the increasingly complex political, economic, social and humanitarian situations.

Since June 2016, a wave of negative political events has added to the problems of Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries in the region such as Venezuela, Brazil, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Haiti are experiencing an increase in social, political and economic crises. These occur in the context of strengthening political sectors and economic groups that promote fundamentalism, protectionist policies and their intolerance of migrants.

Add to this problem an invasion of multinational extractive industries and the unequal impact of climate change. These companies have had unfair access to common goods, such as land and water without adequate environmental protection or fair taxation. Their impact, added to an increasing use of agricultural pesticides, are felt directly by the indigenous and peasant communities, and by the environment. The unequal impact of climate change exacerbates the processes of impoverishment and migration of large sectors of our population.

Political violence has claimed hundreds of lives. Extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions are increasingly directed at human rights defenders, progressive social and political leaders, indigenous peoples, afro-descendants, women and LGBTI people. Racism, xenophobia, hatred of impoverished people, homophobia and misogyny are increasing at all levels.

We are aware that part of the conflicts and violence that we live in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in other parts of the world are based on the development of religious fundamentalism. However, we understand that there is no religious fundamentalism without political and economic fundamentalism that feeds inequalities, injustices and inequities. In fact, these groups are developing discriminatory policies that threaten covenants and global agreements that had been reached.

The members of the ACT Alliance, the ecumenical organizations and the faith-based organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean are concerned, and we are affected by the violent reaction against human rights and the rule of law, the shrinking space for society civil, the decrease in the impartiality and freedom of the press, the increase in corruption and political positions that lack transparency.

The season of Lent reminds us that this is a particular time to be transformed by the action of God who renews life. We have witnessed God's walk on our continent, God’s Word that stands prophetically and transforms us into hope. We recognize in the lives and voices of so many women and men the signs of the Kingdom of Justice; and in their death and legacy, a call for action for dignity. We learned from the indigenous fighters like Berta Caceres from Honduras, from black women like Marielle Franco from Brazil, from Alizon Mosquera, one of the hundreds of human rights defenders murdered in Colombia. The voices of the thousands of people in the caravans of migrants in Central America, of the environmental defenders of the community of Las Granadillas and of the young women victims of the Virgen de la Asunción Safe Home in Guatemala resonate among us.

God's action dislocates us, saves us, demands follow-up and the courage to walk alongside the struggles of our peoples in the construction of democratic societies, in the promotion of economic, social and environmental justice, in the struggle for gender justice and justice for migrant and displaced populations. The gravity of the suffering of our peoples demands us to raise our voice in the face of the political and economic powers that cause the injustice and inequity that affect millions of lives.

We are aware that the struggle to overcome poverty, injustice and violence requires us to take into account the diversity of issues and subjects involved in order to build solutions with democratic proposals based on solidarity and the common good.

We see in the voice and public action of youth the creativity and potential of a prophetic voice in the face of society, governments and multilateral spaces. We have assumed the commitment to learn from them, to work together, and to reinforce their participation and involvement in decision-making processes.

We recognize from our ecumenical and inter-religious vocation that it is both necessary and urgent to expand our alliances with different faith-based organizations and religious communities. In addition to effective dialogues with human rights organizations, social movements, the private sector and governmental and multilateral organizations, we will act jointly based on provocation, reflection and dialogue as we work to keep up with the rapid changes in reality that leave present paradigms with little validity.

We especially appreciate the accompaniment of the President of the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR), Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, of Luis Pedernera Reyna of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the presence of representatives of the United Nations system who joined in the analysis of the context and the possibilities of greater interaction in the face of the challenges that are presented and projected in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We commit to:

* **Establish regional and global networks** to accompany the political and social crises in Latin America and the Caribbean, with special attention to the situations that are experienced in Venezuela, Brazil, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Haiti.
* **Promote and support the voice and strategies of churches and faith-based organizations** in a time of shrinking civil society space, while influencing regional and global organizations.
* **Accompany the communities in their processes of accessing justice** at the local and regional levels, supporting their demands and claims.
* **Strengthen joint action with United Nations agencies and programs** to promote regional and global initiatives on gender justice and against all forms of violence, so as to transform legal frameworks and eliminate discriminatory laws.
* **Challenge impunity and the reduction of civil society space**, while unmasking harmful and corrupt practices and protecting rights-holders.
* **Strengthen internal spaces such as communities of gender justice practice** to generate visions and joint actions against religious fundamentalism and injustice.
* **Ensure that human rights and environmental defenders are protected**, making visible and influencing governments so that the institutional framework works against stigmatization and in favor of access and attention to rights defenders.
* **Produce evidence of violations of rights** so that it reaches the governments and human rights institutions, strengthening the dialogue with the IACHR, the United Nations system, and national and international justice bodies.
* **Strengthen the voice of children and youth**, so that they are full rights-holders in law. The defense of children and youth must be based on the reality of inequity and inequalities where their status as children and youth serve as justification for exclusion, and continues to suffer its consequences.

In this time of Lent and with the approach of the Passover, Holy Week and the Day of Resurrection, we have the certainty from our faith, that hope is revitalized in the incarnate Jesus, to whom we turn before all despair to renew our vocation of justice and love. Jesus, «To whom shall we turn? You have the words of eternal life." (Gospel of John 6:68).