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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It is with joy that I write to you today to share greetings from the World Council of Churches, to the Taizé community and in particular the many young people that are about to join your annual youth gathering, albeit in a different format through online communication this year.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our realities in more ways than we might at first have imagined possible, and we all continue to adapt to new ways of working, of sharing and of praying together.

As the World Council of Churches, we also see that the pandemic has magnified and exposed many facets of injustice and oppression in the world, not least affecting young people around the globe through challenges of unemployment, access to education, access to healthcare and essential necessities, climate emergency, mental health, violence and conflict.

So where do we find hope amid all these uncertainties?

Seeing your theme this year, "Hope in time and out of season," allow me to offer a word of comfort and solidarity, and to reflect on three aspects of our common life these days: *awareness*, *affirmation*, and *accompaniment*.

#### *Awareness of the issues affecting young people and all generations*

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed perhaps more clearly than ever before the disparities of our world today: in income and wealth, access to healthcare, in disparate outcomes based on race or gender. At the same time, more eyes have also been opened to this reality, which in turn has created opportunities for the Church to live out its prophetic calling. This is a time to be awake and to be proactive.

Awareness, discerning the signs of our time, is key to addressing the issues of inequalities and injustice around us, and we have seen many solidarity movements arise, especially led by young people, now that many recognize the need for change.

#### *Affirmation of young people's leadership*

Young people play an essential role in God's transformation in all of His creation. As the WCC, we see that young people are leaders not only of the future, but also in the present day. So may you all feel encouraged to own your voice and agency, speak your minds and remind other generations of your part in building a more peaceful, sustainable, and equitable future for all.

#### *Accompaniment*

We are all interconnected and interrelated as one humanity, and as part of one creation. On our Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, we have learned this year in particular that solidarity at different levels goes beyond physical and in-person gatherings. We move from awareness of the signs of the time, to

affirming young people's leadership, to working together in addressing the issues that affect us all. As young people, you mobilize, you draw inspiration from the strength of your peers and others, and you create initiatives to move us toward a "new normal." As the Letter of James 2:14-17 reminds us, our faith should lead us to act—a collective call to mission as disciples of Christ.

As we look now to your gathering this year, taking place in close connection with the Christmas season, may we all see that the message of hope that is found in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ lives on today, as it was and will become.

I pray that you continue to allow the Holy Spirit to move through you, that you allow God's love to touch your hearts, God's wisdom and strength to empower you in our work for justice and peace, and God's comfort and peace to accompany you all the days of your lives.

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Saucă  
Interim General Secretary  
World Council of Churches

Geneva, December 15, 2020