



**Symposium of Episcopal
Conferences of Africa and Madagascar**



**Justice and Peace
Europe**

Press release (15.02.2022):

Draw the right lessons from the pandemic now, save millions of lives

In a joint statement, the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and Justice and Peace Europe call on the European Union (EU), the African Union (AU) and their member states to strengthen their commitment to equitable global vaccine supply and global health issues ahead of the joint AU-EU Summit.

Bishop Noël Treanor, president of Justice and Peace Europe, notes that the consequences of the pandemic are hitting particularly hard those who were already struggling before the pandemic: "Refugees and homeless people, often living in precarious conditions, live in constant fear of infection and are even more isolated than before. Delivery, seasonal and care workers keep society running at the risk of their health and under sometimes precarious working conditions. While the stock markets are posting record profits, the risk of poverty for children and families has risen further as a result of the pandemic. For many children and young people in particular, the period of full restrictions has been a time of considerable psychological strains".

The still very low vaccination rates in many of the world's poorest countries are not only problematic from a health protection perspective, but also because this slows down the economic recovery in these countries and thus contributes to a further increase in global socio-economic inequality. The countries of the Global South should not only be supported by the delivery of vaccines, but funds should also be made available to build and finance an infrastructure for the rapid distribution of vaccines. Ideally, this should be designed in such a way that the infrastructure can continue to be used after the pandemic to fight other diseases and health problems, thus strengthening health systems permanently.

Indeed, as Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, Vice President of SECAM, notes, the current Corona pandemic is only the tip of the iceberg of a fundamental, much larger crisis of Global Health and Sustainable Development: "In many places, the Global South still lacks even basic health infrastructure. This not only makes it difficult to fight pandemics, but also costs lives. Several billion people, for example, have no access to simple, life-saving surgeries. It is estimated that investment in universal coverage in this area alone could save millions of lives."

SECAM and Justice and Peace Europe therefore call for a significant increase in investment in sustainable strengthening of health systems in countries of the Global South. Furthermore, the statement emphasises that health is a global responsibility and task for society as a whole. In this sense, the organisations advocated for a strengthening of the World Health Organisation and a stronger participation of civil society in health issues.