

Montreal, November 16, 2018

Dear members of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada,

We would like to provide you with an update on the Development and Peace – Caritas Canada review of partner agencies, following our recent meeting with the Standing Committee of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) on Development and Peace on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

Firstly, we want to reiterate, on behalf of the National Council and the whole organization, that we take very seriously the relationship and the partnership that exists between the Bishops of Canada and Development and Peace – Caritas Canada. Our deep attachment, as a Catholic organization, to the values of our Church and to social justice are at the very heart of our programs and activities. We want to reaffirm our commitment to our Church, to the values of Catholic social teaching, and to the full respect for the sanctity of human life. These are the values that enable us to fulfill our mission to serve the poor and support the actions of people in the Global South so that they can take control of their destiny and live in the fullness of human dignity.

It is important to make clear that Development and Peace – Caritas Canada only finances projects that adhere to the values and social teachings of the Catholic Church. We are committed to working with organizations that understand and respect the values and moral position of the Catholic Church. To this end, we apply a Partnership Policy and use several other key documents that we have developed over the years that guide us and provide the criteria in the selection of our project partners, ensuring they respect our core values and contribute to our mission of promoting alternatives to unjust social, political and economic structures.

In late 2017, at the request of the CCCB, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada began a review of process of its 180 partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East to ensure they respect the values and social teachings of the Church, such as the sanctity of human life and the dignity of the human person. This review was initiated in response to persistent allegations that Development and Peace – Caritas Canada's partners were associated with activities that do not adhere to the teachings of the Church. This review was done in collaboration with the CCCB, through an ad-hoc committee assembled specifically for this purpose. Representatives of the CCCB on the committee identified 52 partners that, based on online findings, raise potential questions regarding respect for the teachings of the Church.

To answer the questions that were raised by the CCCB on the 52 partners and the criteria used to select our partners, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada provided an initial analysis in April 2018. After a meeting of the ad-hoc committee in May 2018, our understanding was above all, that Development and Peace – Caritas Canada and its Program Officers had to respond to the results of the research carried out by the CCCB and explain the involvement and positions taken by these 52 partners in their work to alleviate the burden of the poor. As a result, we provided a second analysis in September 2018, intended to be a factual and detailed response by providing in-depth research in order to clarify the concerns raised. Regrettably, we understood the request differently than what was seemingly expected, and following the recent Bishop’s Plenary we were asked to again provide additional analysis, particularly on the criteria we use to select our partners.

Since then, our team has proposed several avenues and possible solutions to help us rebuild a climate of trust with the Bishops of Canada. While we work through these challenges and rebuild relationships with Bishops we will also need to develop a common understanding of the challenges that we, and the poorest and most vulnerable, face in bringing changes to the structural causes of injustices and in the fight against poverty on a non-discriminatory basis, serving others regardless of religion, culture, race and political opinion.

The renewed analysis that we are carrying out, as a complement to what we submitted to the CCCB in September, is based on a review of our partners through additional criteria that better respond to the concerns of the CCCB. In our discussions with the Bishops of Canada we have gained a better understanding of the underlying issues and believe we can respond effectively. We select our partners on their ability to walk alongside the poorest and support them in taking charge of their own future. This is done through a systematic process that includes applying criteria guided by key principles and respecting our approach to partnership, which enshrines our Catholic values, most importantly the preferential option for the poor and subsidiarity. However, we understand the need for vigilance, and through our governance body of the National Council, we will review and revise the criteria we use to ensure our partners respect the teachings of the Church and improve our communications and expectations with our partners.

We hope that this approach will act as a statement of our promise to work with the Catholic Church, living out her teachings and guided by the Bishops of Canada, in our common vision of building a world of justice and peace.

To demonstrate our commitment to finding solutions to the current challenges, and to follow up on the various correspondences we have recently received from several Bishops, Development and Peace – Caritas Canada will not use 2018 Share Lent funds for the 52 partners under review, so long as the situation of the partners is not clarified, and we have placed a temporary moratorium on the financing of the partners in question. Although there have been questions around the 2019 Share Lent campaign, we are hopeful that a satisfactory resolution to this crisis will allow for the Church to confirm its participation in the Lenten campaign. We are requesting your support and prayers as well.

In dialogue with our Bishops, they have repeatedly expressed their trust and confidence in the laity, who as a dynamic movement is putting into action the social justice mission of the Church. We wish to reaffirm to you, our members, that Development and Peace – Caritas Canada is doing everything in its power to remain a professional, transparent and responsible organization with its members and Catholic communities. The support of the Bishops of Canada is as important to us as the gifts of time, energy and commitment our members bring to the organization, you who are the lifeblood of Development and Peace – Caritas Canada.

Your solidarity and the work of our partners has transformed the lives of millions of people throughout the Global South, and it is very important to note that no one has questioned the over 200 annual projects we manage, nor questioned the use of the \$26 million, with which we are able to act in more than 80 countries in support of our vulnerable sisters and brothers. All this, and for more than 50 years!

We ask you, our members, and the Bishops of Canada to trust in our sincere commitment to answer all your concerns. We are, and will always be, a fully Catholic organization that works for poor and vulnerable all over the world. Our members and donors in the parishes, schools, communities of all the dioceses of Canada remain for us the concrete sign of a living church, which responds to the call of the gospel, that of creating a community bound by love and service towards others.

In peace and solidarity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Serge Langlois". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Serge Langlois  
Executive Director