
EU-AU: Churches of Europe and Africa call on Summit to overcome health crisis together. SECAM-Justice and Peace Statement

“The Corona pandemic is not only a health crisis, but also a crisis for integral human development as a whole. Indeed, the consequences of the pandemic go beyond health problems”. Thus begins the 11-page document jointly prepared by the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and Justice and Peace Europe in view of the EU-AU Summit on 17-18 February. The document looks into the social, economic and psychological impact of the pandemic on “those who were already marginalised before the pandemic and are particularly hard hit by its consequences”. Africa is lagging behind due to a “lack of vaccines” and “basic health infrastructure”. According to the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, by the end of January 2022, only 10,5 % of the African population had been vaccinated with two doses, 16% with one dose, 1% with three doses. The document contains a number of complaints: “During the last few months, it became clear that the development, production and distribution of medicines are primarily driven by profit expectations”; moreover, “according to reports, at times some countries in the Global South had to pay many times more for the purchase of vaccine doses compared to the prices paid by the EU”. These market dynamics have already “prevented important developments in the health sector” related to medicines and the treatment of “diseases, which cost many lives, especially in the Global South”. As things stand, it is impossible “to build trusting relationships”. This is why a series of proposals are made to “strengthen the global health” (starting with COVID-19 vaccines), to “sustainably strengthen health systems” overall, and finally to reform the WHO.

Valentina Bombelli