



*Statement of the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences
of the European Union (COMECE)*

***Europe, offer a renewed vision for justice and peace
to the continent and to the world!***

We, the Delegates of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Union (EU), gathered for the 2023 Autumn Plenary Assembly of COMECE, wish to express our deep concern about the serious deterioration of international security and peace.

The world seems to be regressing into a dangerous dynamic, reminiscent of some of the darkest hours of humankind which were meant to remain in history books. The polarisation of the international community, fuelled by a renewed logic of competition between the great powers, along with eroding trust in multilateral cooperation frameworks, leaves open the scenario of an uncontrollable escalation with catastrophic consequences for the whole of humanity.

In recent months, the neighbourhood of the European Union has become a true ring of fire, both to the East and to the South. We are particularly concerned about Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine and the pain of the Armenian people in the Caucasus region.

We suffer with all the victims of the barbaric terrorist attacks perpetrated in Israel on 7th October and of the subsequent devastating violence unfolding in Palestine.

With deep sorrow we pray for all the victims of these and other conflicts in the world, in particular the children. We equally wish to express our closeness to their families, as well as to all who suffer from the consequences of war and violence.

Such international polarisation and regional instabilities also have repercussions for European societies, stirring up fears, weakening dialogue and threatening social cohesion. Dangerous phenomena have been gaining ground in several European countries, such as anti-Semitism, radicalisation and xenophobia, often fuelled by a systematic spread of disinformation and resulting in violent extremism and terrorism, which we strongly condemn in all their forms and expressions.

We wish to recall the opening words of the memorable Declaration by Venerable Robert Schuman: *"World peace cannot be safeguarded without the making of creative efforts proportionate to the dangers which threaten it"*.

In communion with our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who addressed our Assembly in March 2023, we call upon the leaders of the EU, as well as all European citizens, to rediscover and embrace the two great dreams of Europe's founding fathers: unity and peace. The roots, values and Treaties of the European Union ask all of us to recommit to that path.

We dream of a Europe which fully employs its potential to settle conflicts and to light lamps of hope, acting as a united, trustful and integrating force, cherishing democratic principles and the rule of law, within and outside its borders.

We wish to reiterate that peace is more than the absence of war and violence. Constructing peace also requires coherent efforts aimed at promoting human dignity, justice, integral human development and the care of Creation.

We strongly encourage political representatives of our Union to play an active role in shaping and offering to the continent and to the world a renewed vision for stability, justice and peace. While not giving in to a logic of war, the European Union should open up new processes of dialogue and develop a coherent diplomacy of peace. In view of becoming a true bridge and peacemaker in its neighbourhood and in the world, the EU should also show leadership in rebuilding a global architecture of peace, rooted in effective multilateralism and respect for international law, including sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of other States.

Coherent implementation of global arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements should be equally prioritised in view of fostering mutual trust as a pillar of international stability.

Building lasting peace requires both architects and artisans, and thus we are all called to contribute to this common task, promoting a culture of encounter, solidarity and peace.

Praying to Our Lady, the Queen of Peace, we ask the Lord for the gift of reconciliation and peace to our tormented world. *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God"* (Mt, 5:9).

Approved by the delegate Bishops of COMECE:

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