**Villarceaux Declaration of the International Committee for October 17 at the end of its 11th biennial meeting in June 2026**

1. *We*, members of the International Committee for October 17, together with members of the ATD Fourth World General Assembly, gathered at Villarceaux in the Paris region from 2 to 6 June 2026 to stand in solidarity with people living in poverty, sustain our collective resolve in breaking the silence surrounding the root causes of poverty, and develop a plan of action to promote the founding spirit of October 17 – the World Day for Overcoming Poverty/International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. On Friday, 5th June 2026, we gathered at the original October 17 Commemorative Stone, inaugurated in 1987 by Joseph Wresinski with one hundred thousand people at the Trocadero Human Rights Plaza in Paris. We reaffirmed our commitment to the text engraved on the Stone: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty." And in drafting this declaration, we recalled the previous declarations of the Committee – Gorée (2024), Paris (2022), Méry-sur-Oise (2020) and Rome (2018) – and pledge to do our best to end poverty in all its forms, its visible and hidden dimensions, including ending social and institutional maltreatment.

2. *We assert* that:
    a. **Poverty is produced and reproduced by policy choices**, unequal power relations, discriminatory norms, and institutional practices that deny people the effective enjoyment of their human rights;

    b. **Poverty persists**, in rich and poor countries alike, because of i) entrenched discrimination; ii) disempowering and dehumanising social, political, and economic systems; and iii) the denial of access to resources, recognition, rights, and agency. These make it impossible for the most deprived to liberate themselves from the chains of misery.
    c. **Poverty can be overcome.** This requires more than poverty reduction programmes. It requires the co-design of policies with people living in poverty, whose knowledge and experience are indispensable to justice,

peace and democracy; the transformation of structures that generate exclusion; the redistribution of power and resources; the protection of civic space; and the strengthening of public services and social protection.

3. *We recall* the recent Doha Political Declaration (November 2025) and the promise of governments to take action to build a just, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world, addressing underlying and structural causes of poverty, social exclusion, and insecurity in accordance with international law, including human rights obligations.

4. *We note with grave concern* that we are living in a world that is unjust, unequal, and unsafe; a world where discrimination, social exclusion, and human suffering are widespread. One in five children under five is not officially recognised through birth registration. One in five of all children is living in extreme poverty.[1] Although there is enough food and there are enough resources to offer a dignified life to everyone, large parts of humanity go hungry every day and live in unbearable conditions. Two thirds of the world's working population are informal workers with no job security or decent working conditions, and nearly half of the world's population have no social protection.[2]

5. *We denounce* the existence of this widespread destitution and subsequent human suffering alongside the extreme material wealth. Since 2020, billionaire wealth has grown by 81%.[3] The world's twelve richest people own more wealth than the poorest half of humanity.[4] We denounce the growing concentration of economic and political influence, including through media ownership, lobbying, campaign financing and the weakening of democratic accountability – the latter being a root cause of the spread of corruption and the subsequent rise in human rights violations. We further strongly condemn the policy choices that enable billionaire wealth and corporate profits to skyrocket whilst shrinking the fiscal space that funds public services, official development assistance, and values-based multilateral and accountability systems.

6. *We note with great concern* the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence, which presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant risks. From a human rights perspective, technological progress must not come at the expense of the rights to work, social protection, adequate standard of living, and human dignity.

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1 UNICEF The Right Start in Life 2024
2 ILO World Social Protection Report 2024-26
3 Oxfam Global Inequality Report 2026
4 World Inequality Report 2026

The benefits of innovation must be shared equitably, particularly with those who are already vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion.

7. *We are outraged* by the systematic violations of human rights and by the impunity enjoyed by those responsible. We recall that human rights stem from the lessons learnt from wars, crimes against humanity, and genocides. They are not abstract ideals that stand in the way of progress but the necessary foundations for building and preserving peace between peoples. Ideological attacks on human rights are a denial of the lessons of history, a moral failure, and serve only the powerful.

8. *We note with grave concern* that inequality is not confined to income or wealth. It affects every domain of economic and social life.

    a. The climate emergency is a manifestation of inequality and a new form of violence against people living in poverty. The wealthiest 10% of the world population accounts for 77% of global emissions,[5] and yet the most deprived communities – who contribute the least to climate change – bear the heaviest burden. They face increased extreme weather events, they suffer the destruction of their homes, crops and livelihoods, and they are the most exposed to all forms of pollution. The environmental crisis cannot be separated from unequal access to resources, nor from the historical responsibilities of the most powerful actors and countries.
    b. Inequality has a profound impact on children, older people, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, migrants, displaced persons, racialised communities and all those who face intersecting forms of discrimination. Among these groups, women and girls are disproportionately affected. Gender-based inequalities remain a persistent and widespread form of inequality – their deep-rooted nature within societal structures determines who has access to education, land and resources, as well as whose work is recognised and remunerated. Ending poverty requires recognising, redistributing and valuing the care work that most often falls to women and girls, guaranteeing equal rights and dismantling the structures that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and violence.
    c. Large disparities between low- and high-income countries persist, while pronounced inequalities within countries undermine social cohesion. Unequal access to life's chances — illustrated by educational spending gaps

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as large as 1:40 between sub-Saharan Africa and North America[6] — continues to reinforce entrenched global wealth hierarchies. In addition, the global financial system perpetuates these inequalities by structurally favouring wealthier countries and enabling the ongoing flow of resources from poorer countries to richer ones. This calls for urgent reform of international financial, tax and debt systems so that they serve human rights, ecological sustainability and social justice.

9. *We are alarmed* to see many countries turning inwards, calling the principle of international solidarity into question, and cutting budgets for development aid – a situation that is already costing thousands of lives.

10. *We note with great concern* the multiplication of brutal wars, plagued with war crimes and crimes against humanity, and condemn the flagrant violations of the UN Charter. Often using wars as an excuse, countries far away from combat reallocate public funds from social services to military purposes and push millions of people into poverty. Peace cannot be reduced to the absence of war. It requires justice, social protection, access to rights, and democratic participation so that people can live free from fear, humiliation, and deprivation.

11. *We note with concern* that economic models that treat GDP growth as the primary measure of progress, while neglecting human rights, social wellbeing, ecological limits and the lived experience of people in poverty, have not only failed to end poverty but increased inequalities and insecurities.

12. *We note* that the forthcoming three years (2026-2028) mark milestone anniversaries:
    a. 2026 — the 60th anniversary of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), as well as the 40th anniversary of the Declaration of the Right to Development;
    b. 2027 — the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of the first Commemorative Stone in honour of the victims of poverty and the gathering of human rights defenders on 17th October 1987, which gave rise to the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty;
    c. 2028 — the 80th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

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Beyond commemorative moments, these anniversaries must become opportunities to renew the awareness of the indivisibility of all human rights and to place the fight against poverty at the centre of democratic, social, and ecological transformation.

13. *We embrace* the timely umbrella theme for October 17 – "United for Peace and Human Rights". We also welcome the 2026 focus of October 17 on achieving "Safe homes for all". A safe home is not only a roof. It is a place where people can live without fear, hunger, humiliation or exclusion; a place connected to rights and community.

14. In uniting for peace and human rights, *we call* on all states to
    a. Meet their obligation to respect, protect, and progressively fulfil human rights as enshrined in the international instruments;
    b. Ensure that the realisation of a dignified life for all is the first priority, by ensuring access to fundamental rights;
    c. Address power imbalances and move from tokenistic participation to inclusive deliberation. This means co-designing policies to end poverty together with people living in poverty, in line with the Guiding Principles on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights and the support of inclusive tools, most notably the Inclusive and Deliberative Elaboration and Evaluation of Policies (IDEEP). This also means recognising people living in poverty as rights holders and knowledge holders, indispensable to democratic life;
    d. Renew their commitment to global goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals that are benchmarks for the realisation of human rights;
    e. Strengthen accountability systems from the international to local levels;
    f. Expand public fiscal space through fair and progressive taxation, including taxation of excessive wealth, harmful financial flows and corporate profits, and use these new resources to finance international cooperation and multilateral accountability systems to ensure that no one is left behind;
    g. Confront the failures of the economic growth model in reducing poverty and pursue development pathways that decentre GDP as the primary measure of progress and instead place the realisation of human rights, social wellbeing and ecological integrity at their heart, using a roadmap co-constructed by UN agencies, Member States, civil society organisations, trade unions, grassroots movements, and academic experts;

h. Achieve universal birth registration by 2030 and guarantee that every human being in their territories has the right to a legal identity;
i. Ensure universal access to essential social protection measures in line with their obligations under United Nations agreements;
j. Protect and expand public services and ensure that austerity measures do not undermine the rights and dignity of people living in poverty;
k. Protect civic space and ensure that people living in poverty, grassroots movements, civil society organisations, trade unions and human rights defenders can speak, organise, participate and hold institutions accountable without fear of repression, stigma or retaliation;
l. Ensure that the development, deployment, and governance of artificial intelligence contribute to human well-being, social inclusion, and sustainable development.

15. *We call* for stronger, more open and more inclusive commemorations of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, a day that exemplifies solidarity at its strongest. These commemorations must be rooted in the voices, experiences and knowledge of people living in poverty. They must be spaces of dignity, memory, resistance, dialogue and collective action. They must call for unity amongst all people to ensure that the human rights and dignity of every individual are upheld.

16. From Villarceaux to the Trocadero Human Rights Plaza, *we reaffirm* the founding spirit of October 17: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty." The text of the Commemorative Stone is and must be a call to action in every community, every institution and every public policy.

17. *We call* on people of all generations – and especially young people – to stand with those who are pushed furthest behind, to listen to their knowledge, to defend their rights, and to build together societies where every person, from birth to the end of their life, can live in peace, security and dignity.

**About the International Committee for October 17**

The International Committee for October 17 promotes the founding spirit of the World Day for Overcoming Poverty / International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. This day was first observed in 1987, when Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, and over 100,000 human rights defenders from around the world gathered at the Trocadero Human Rights Plaza in Paris to pay tribute to the victims of hunger, ignorance, and violence. They affirmed their conviction that extreme poverty is not inevitable. They proclaimed their solidarity with those who, across the world, strive to eradicate it and inaugurated a commemorative plaque whose text reads: "Wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, human rights are violated. To come together to ensure that these rights be respected is our solemn duty." Joseph Wresinski

In 1992, with resolution 47/196, the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized October 17th, World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. On the occasion of 17 October 2008, Mr Cassam Uteem, former President of the Republic of Mauritius (1992-2002) and the International Movement ATD Fourth World announced the creation of the International Committee for October 17.

**International Committee for October 17,**
**12 rue Pasteur,**
**95 480 Pierrelaye,**
**FRANCE**
**comite.international@oct17.org**
**overcomingpoverty.org**