06 July 2020, Pierrelaye, France - We are pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Jean Toussaint to the International Committee for October 17. The Committee was established in 2008 to promote and support the observance of the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty, observed on October 17th each year, which is recognized as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by the United Nations.

“I am delighted to welcome Mr. Jean Toussaint as a member of the International Committee” said Donald Lee, President of the International Committee. “Through his commitment to October 17 in different countries for many years, Jean Toussaint has contributed to developing the mobilization to make clear that wherever men and women are condemned to live in extreme poverty, their human rights are being violated. His personal knowledge, reflections and experience will enrich and strengthen the work of the Committee to promote and support the spirit and objectives of October 17.”

Jean Toussaint has been a permanent volunteer with ATD Fourth World since 1982 and has carried out many missions, including: Sharing housing in very poor and stigmatized neighbourhoods; establishing the Movement in the Central African Republic; managing an enterprise targeting workers who have long been excluded from the job market; coordinating the People’s University in the North of France; responsible for an action aimed at the professional integration of very disadvantaged young people, often out of school/training; co-responsible for the Movement in France; responsible for fund/friend raising; and, member of the research team on “extreme poverty is violence.”

He was a member of the International Leadership Team of the International Movement ATD Fourth World from 2012 to 2016, and member of the ATD Fourth World Delegation for the Indian Ocean from 2017 to 2019. Since 2020, he has been with the team in charge of the development of the Merging of Knowledge, an initiative aiming at co-constructing knowledge with the most disadvantaged people.

During all these commitments he has learned a lot from the courage, the sense of others and the intelligence of the most disadvantaged populations. He is now more convinced than ever that justice and peace can never be achieved without the close involvement of those who most experience injustice and violence. Jean believes that October 17 presents everyone with an opportunity to experience innovative partnerships with the poorest, in which their presence and participation inspires us to always seek to surpass ourselves, and not to be content with a situation where so many people are marginalized and mistreated.

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The International Committee for October 17 was established in 2008 with the following goals: to promote the 17 of October as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, as recognized by the United Nations, uniting those who are striving together to end poverty; to promote the observance of the 17 of October in its original spirit; and, to promote opportunities where people from a variety of backgrounds, including those whose lives are most difficult, can work together in the fight against extreme poverty as a violation of Human Rights. (http://overcomingpoverty.org/article/international-committee-for-october-17)

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was first celebrated as the World Day for Overcoming Extreme Poverty at a major public rally held on the 17 of October 1987 in Paris, where one hundred thousand people from all backgrounds responded to a call from Father Joseph Wresinski, founder of ATD Fourth World, to gather at the Plaza of Liberties and Human Rights. On this day, a declaration was engraved on a Commemorative Stone proclaiming that extreme poverty is a violation of human rights and affirming the need for all people to unite to ensure that these rights are respected. (http://overcomingpoverty.org/article/history-of-october-17)

In 1992, the United Nations proclaimed the 17 of October as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Since then, governments, local authorities, members of civil society and the private sector have recognized the importance of this International Day, which has become a key rallying point for a growing number of citizens and organizations from all backgrounds, in the fight to eradicate extreme poverty. (http://www.un-documents.net/a48r183.htm)

Inclusive processes lead to change. Merging Knowledge is a technique to help people facing extreme poverty and social exclusion dialogue with policy makers, business leaders, social workers, and teachers. The goal is to overcome differences in speaking and thinking, life experience and perspective, so that constructive discussions can occur. Merging Knowledge bridges gaps between people from different backgrounds by creating an environment of respect and patience. (https://www.atd-fourthworld.org/what-we-do/participation/merging-knowledge)