



INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR 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." Father Joseph Wresinski

OCTOBER 17 2020 STATEMENT - AYE AYE WIN

As the new President of the International Committee for October 17th, I would like to thank you all for joining this commemoration. On this day, we gather at the commemorative stone like this one, here at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, to bear witness to the poorest in our society. Replicas of this 'symbol of humanity' exist in many cities and villages across the world and to-day, many of you will be gathered around them to show solidarity with those leading the most difficult lives and who resist with dignity.

2020 has been a particularly challenging year and the COVID 19 pandemic has shown once again that whenever there is a crisis, the poorest are the hardest hit. It has put a spotlight on the deepening social and environmental inequalities.

To keep safe, we have been given instructions to wash hands, keep distance, stay home. If you are living in extreme poverty, in areas closest to worst sources of pollution and environmental damage, even these small safety measures become a big challenge. How can you wash your hands when you have no access clean water ? How can you keep distance when you share a tiny space in an overcrowded settlement? How can you stay home when your very survival depends on the work you do for the day? In a world of plenty, WHY are so many people still living in conditions of misery? Faces unseen. Voices unheard. Forgotten. Left behind.

October 17th is a chance to speak out and reaffirm that

**"WHEREVER MEN AND WOMEN ARE CONDEMNED TO LIVE
IN EXTREME POVERTY, HUMAN RIGHTS ARE VIOLATED."**

We are members of the International Committee for October 17th. We come from different countries, different cultural, social professional backgrounds and we are UNITED to promote this international day in its TRUE SPIRIT. We honour the people in the frontline of the struggle against poverty and environmental challenges. Your experiences count. Your lives matter. We pledge our solidarity and our commitment to act together to achieve social and environmental justice for everyone. Thank you.