THE REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION CRISIS

A Statement by the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges, and Universities Board of Directors

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In this era of unrest, violence, and war, the world faces a humanitarian crisis in terms of migration, immigration, human trafficking, slave trade, and refugees which involves millions of people. Children and women are especially affected and victimized. Many if not most of them are exploited and/or victims of violence. All are impoverished. All will bear the stains of their treatment the rest of their lives. Indeed, children and women are some of the most vulnerable members of the global community. They all need our compassion and care. This crisis is manifest in various parts of the world.

We have gathered as members of the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges, and Universities (IAMSCU) Board of Directors in the global cities of Puebla, in Mexico, and London, in England. Events of these times prompt us to reflect on how the refugee crisis affects the southern border of the United States, Mexico, and many countries and communities in Central and South America that cope daily with this issue. When we look at Europe, the Mediterranean area, and further toward Asia and the Pacific Rim, we realize that this is truly a global crisis.

We are aware of Biblical mandates to love our neighbor, to help those in distress, to care for little children, to feed the hungry, to welcome the stranger, to extend hospitality to strangers. We reaffirm the words of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, who called on his followers to "Do all the good you can by all the means you can in all the ways you can in all the places you can at all the times you can to all the people you can as long as ever you can."

We express our solidarity in particular with the United Methodist Bishops in the United States, the Methodist Bishops in Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico and Panama as well as Church Leaders in Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, who are committed to work together in Central America. We acknowledge the work of the United Methodist Immigration Task Force, the initiatives of the Committee on Theological Education of the World Methodist Council (WMC), and the activities of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in various parts of the world. We particularly reaffirm their pledge to "work with faith and community leadership to provide housing, life necessities, pastoral/spiritual care, and as stable an environment as possible for children and families" affected by the refugee and immigration crisis. But our concern extends beyond this area to address the issue all over world because this is truly a world-wide issue.

In addition, we call on governments to give serious and responsible attention to all refugees, especially women and children, to treat them with dignity and care, and to respect the integrity of family units. We call on governments, even in the midst of their concern for economic and national security issues, not to succumb to the fear that hardens hearts; rather, we call on them to transcend fear and raw political power with love, reason, wisdom, and generosity of spirit so that all people are cared for humanely and compassionately. Furthermore, we affirm our commitment to the politics of the Reign of God – a politics of God's peace, healing, and purpose for humanity that transcends all walls constructed to separate God's diverse people one from the other.

As members of the International Association of Methodist-related Schools, Colleges, and Universities Board of Directors we join our brothers and sisters in Methodist churches and educational institutions in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America, and all over the world in reaffirming our commitment to education as the key to address the new challenges that are upon us as a result of the crisis of lack of solidarity with the refugee and the immigrant. We invite all member institutions of IAMSCU to express their solidarity and to work together to promote the values expressed in this statement.