



## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INT THE PHILIPPINES

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### Council of Bishops

#### Statement on the 111<sup>th</sup> International Women's Day March 08, 2022

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines expresses solidarity and support for the global working women's movement for parity and justice whatever class, caste and religious group they belong. In consonance with the celebration, the UCCP reiterates two of its ethical principles, to wit:

The fundamental values of love, justice, truth and compassion are at the heart of our witness to the world and our service to the Church.

In accordance with the biblical understanding that all persons are created in the image of God, the Church affirms and upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other agreements on human rights, the international covenants on economic, social and cultural rights and on civil and political rights, the 1984 Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, and those that relate specifically to refugees, women, youth, children, minority groups and other persons who cannot safeguard their own rights. – (UCCP Amended CBL Art. 2 Sec. 5 & 8)

Today, we once again recall that the International Women's Day grew out of the historic labor movement to become an annual event recognized by the United Nations. It can be recalled that the seeds were planted in 1908, when 15,000 women marched through New York demanding shorter working hours, better pay and the right to vote. A year later, the Socialist Party of America declared the first National Woman's Day.<sup>1</sup>

We should not forget that it was Clara Zetkin, an activist and advocate for women's rights, who suggested the creation of an international day. She put her idea to an International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen in 1910 - and the 100 women there, from 17 countries, agreed to it unanimously. International Women's Day was first celebrated in 1911, in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland. The centenary was celebrated in 2011, so this year we're technically celebrating the 111th.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the United Nations announced their theme for 2022 as "Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow". Their events will recognize how women around the world are responding to climate change. But there are also other themes around. The International Women's Day website - which says it's designed to "provide a platform to help forge positive change for women" - has chosen the theme **#BreakTheBias** and is asking people to imagine "a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-60610678>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/Activity/15586/The-history-of-IWD>

In the home front, women and girls in society are integral part of the struggle for parity in the respect of fundamental human rights and civil liberties. The period of rise of the cases of Covid-19 in the country, women have suffered the impact of the pandemic, they have experienced hunger, unemployment, discrimination in access to social services and other forms of abuse. The pandemic was used as an opportunity for corruption in the high echelons of power in government.

Specifically, the following social developments in the country cause the deep concern of the Church and needs to be addressed at all fronts and by all sectors of society:

1. The worsening of the economic situation is real and felt by the entire nation. Last year the oil price hike was implemented on a weekly basis and the giant oil cartel dictates the price of gasoline, diesel and other oil products. From January to December 2021 the total oil price increase has reached to P20 per liter for gasoline, P18.45 pesos for diesel and P16.05 for every liter of kerosene. More oil price increase are expected in the coming weeks with the war between Russia and Ukraine has been used as the alibi to extract more profits at the disadvantage of the end-users such as the public transport drivers and the people who will be impacted by the price increase of commodities.
2. The domino effect of Oil Deregulation Law on the quality of life of people could not be underestimated while the State allowed it to be hogtied with the law, making it susceptible to never ending price increase of gasoline, diesel, kerosene and other oil products. Aside from this, the TRAIN Law of the Duterte government has ballooned the excise tax on oil that allows the unprecedented price increases in the oil products in the midst of the pandemic wherein there is high unemployment, lack of economic support and the rising cost of food, utilities and basic commodities.
3. Women's economic conditions in the country worsen in the world's longest lockdown under President Duterte. A conservative estimate shows that unemployment among women increased by 15.6% in 2020, as workers in low-paying jobs were the first to be laid off. Peasant women suffered from neoliberal policies and lack of government production support and aid amid the lockdown and the consecutive typhoons in late 2020. Women's rights defenders and groups who respond to communities' needs and rights are killed and attacked. According to 2020 data, there were already 40 women's rights defenders killed and 100 women political prisoners under President Duterte.<sup>4</sup>
4. Killings and attacks against activists in the country intensify under the counter-insurgency program and Terror Law. On March 7, at least five activists were killed and three were illegally arrested. The government's National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict licenses the brazen state massacres as it

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<sup>4</sup> IBON International, <https://iboninternational.org/2021/03/08/working-class-women-are-crucial-in-ushering-social-transformation/>, retrieved 07 March 2022

refuses to distinguish between armed rebels and civilian activists in order to classify the latter as military targets. <sup>5</sup>

On this 111<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Women's Day, women in all sectors including women in the Church are challenge to openly express their political power through their participation in exposing the social ills in the present social order and strengthen the ethical resolve to work for the interests of women and the marginalized and discriminated people. For we know that the rights of women are not guaranteed in the existing national and global systems, but these can be claimed by themselves by the strength of the collective action of women in all sectors of society.

We accompany this statement of solidarity and concern with a prayer:

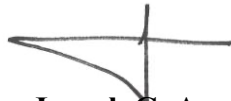
Loving and caring God, strengthen our wills and revitalize our slackened hands to work for the transformation of our society where women and men have been discriminated and the possibilities to experience parity and justice are fraught with threats and uncertainties. Make our prophetic witness come alive wherever and whenever women are treated unjustly and marginalized. Amen.+++

**THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS**

**08 March 2022**



**Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog**  
General Secretary



**Bishop Joseph G. Agpaoa**  
*North Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



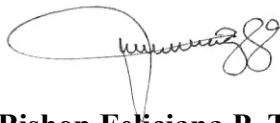
**Bishop Emergencio D. Padillo**  
*Middle Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Joel E. Tendero**  
*South Luzon Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Jerome C. Baris**  
*East Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



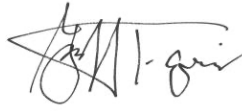
**Bishop Feliciana P. Tenchavez**  
*West Visayas Jurisdictional Area*



**Bishop Ligaya F. San Francisco**  
*West Mindanao Jurisdictional Area*

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



**Bishop Hamuel G. Tequis**  
*South East Mindanao Jurisdictional Area*

**Bishop Emeriti**

Bishop Arturo R. Asi  
South Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Modesto Villasanta  
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction

Bishop Erme R. Camba  
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Bishop Elorde Sambat  
North Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Ebenezer Camino  
West Visayas Jurisdiction

Bishop Constante Claro  
Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction

Bishop Marino Inong  
North Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza  
North Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Dulce Pia-Rose  
East Visayas Jurisdiction

Bishop Jessie Suarez  
Middle Luzon Jurisdiction

Bishop Rizalino Taganas  
East Visayas Jurisdiction