

15 March 2020

## From the International Council

Dear Friends,

We write as alarm over the impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) rises to panic in many countries. We are facing a threat unlike any other, and in many countries the expectation is that worse is yet to come. What can we do?

Like all citizens, we can help prevent or slow the spread of the disease through the information we have received – washing hands, staying clear of crowds, isolating ourselves if unwell.

And let us be proactive in exploring for ideas which help get us through the crisis. Yes, there are medical experts, who we must heed. But expertise alone is not enough. **We are all in this together, and all our contributions are needed.**

Because we are not just confronting an infectious disease. We are also confronting widespread fear. Fear of the disease, and fear that our leaders and institutions are not capable of dealing with this crisis. Let us do what we can to quell panic and offer a grounded approach, balanced with responsible behaviour.

Let us reach out to those who are most vulnerable - the homeless, the frail - and support our medical staff wherever possible, since they will bear the brunt of this crisis. We can all help keep up morale, especially among those who are isolated, and the elderly. Where visiting is not possible, we have the phone, and other means of long-distance contact. **Let us share stories of inspiration and compassion. Post warm words and thoughts to our social accounts.**

Since we are unable to hold in-person events, each of us is probably more alone than usual. The isolation offers us the chance to go deeper into ourselves, to find inspiration from books, from nature, from prayer. A chance to step back and reflect on where we are going, as individuals, and in our work of Initiatives of Change.

And let's use this opportunity for new creativity. Might you try your hand at writing of your discoveries in life? Some might try writing a new song, a new sketch, even a new play. Or heighten your skill in painting, or photography, or a foreign language. You may get ideas on films we should create, or new audio productions. You might even find how to tell a story of change in a way that goes viral on social media.

**Never is there greater need for lofC values at the heart of our lives and communities.**

With thoughts and prayers for all,

**Mounir Beltaifa**

**Vice President, International Council**