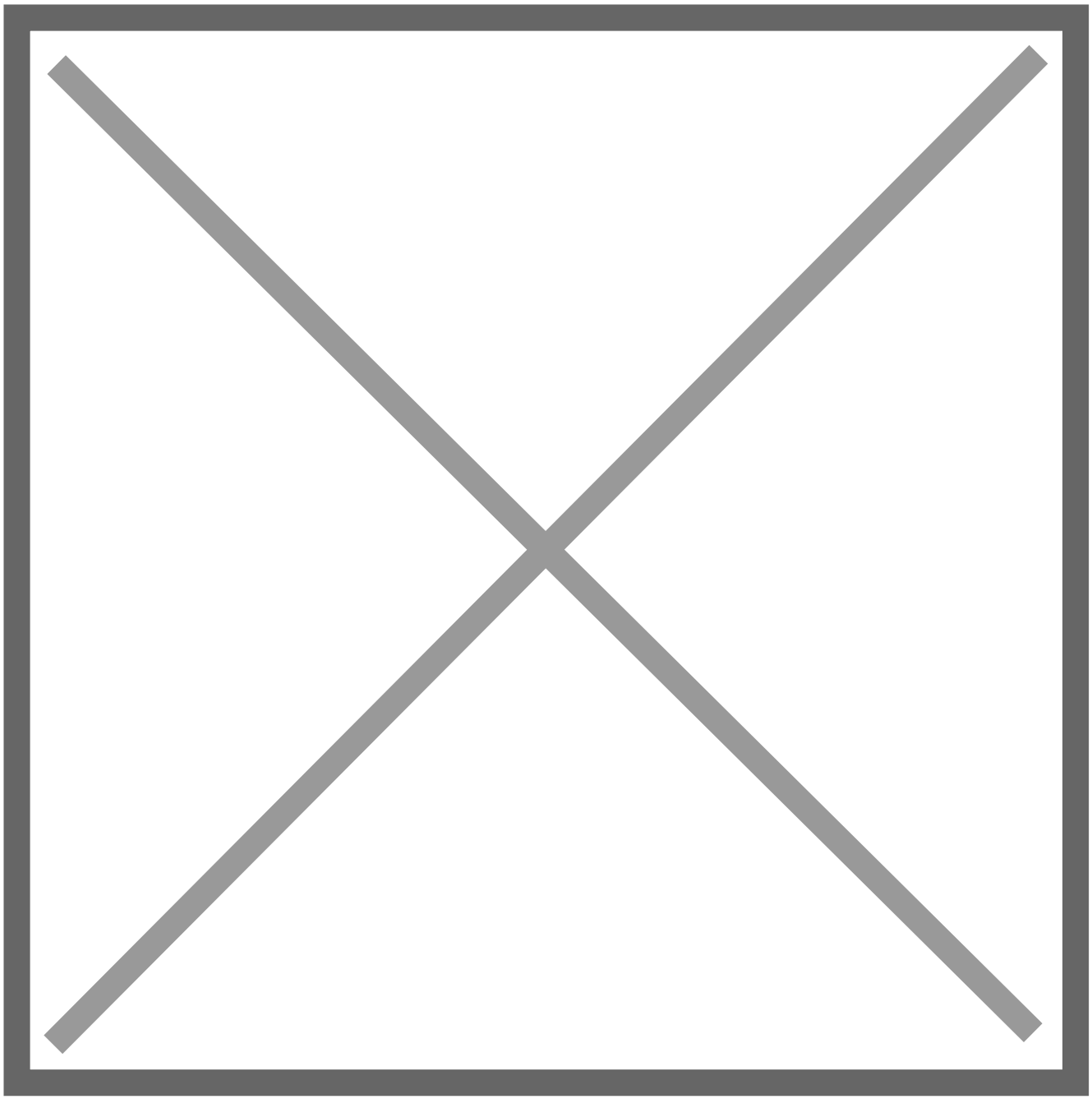
News



Health workers in Soyapango, El Salvador, load a truck with doses of the coronavirus vaccine May 13, 2021. (CNS photo/Jose Cabezas, Reuters)



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Washington — June 9, 2021
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A national Catholic group of over 50 religious and nonprofit organizations is urging President Joe Biden to address global COVID-19 vaccine access during the upcoming G7 summit.

Donald McCrabb, convenor for the newly established Catholic Cares Coalition, signed a June 7 letter on behalf of the group working to promote the COVID-19 vaccine and address vaccine equity in the United States and around the world. McCrabb is executive director of the U.S. Catholic Mission Association.

The letter expressed gratitude for Biden's leadership and his support of efforts to produce and distribute vaccines, but it also stressed more needs to be done as "as sickness and death from COVID-19 continue unabated in countries around the word."

The group urged Biden and the leaders of the other G7 countries -- Canada, Japan, Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom -- to "support a robust global response to the COVID-19 pandemic" with collaborative leadership recognizing that "no one is safe unless all of us are safe."

The summit is taking place June 11-13 in Cornwall, England. Leaders from Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa also have been invited to attend. Most of the discussions are private, but a communication is issued at the end of the gathering

that includes the decisions made by the participants.

Catholic Cares Coalition thanked Biden for his continued support of COVAX -- a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines -- and for his agreement to share 80 million doses of U.S. vaccine supplies to other countries by the end of June.

They also applauded his support for "temporarily waiving intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines to make more doses available" and urged that this continue.

The coalition was announced April 7, on World Health Day, and Mercy Sister Mary Haddad, president and CEO of the Catholic Health Association, described its formation as a "clarion call for us to act."

Its members include CHA, Catholic Charities USA, Catholic Relief Services and Jesuit Refugee Service along with religious orders and groups representing church ministries in education, chaplaincy, advocacy and mission work.

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The group's letter to Biden emphasized the struggles of the past pandemic year and said that its members had formed partnerships with state and local public health agencies, businesses, faith groups and community organizations especially to "bring COVID-19 testing and treatment to hard-to-reach minority and rural populations."

They also said they "recognize that difficult decisions must be made about allocating limited resources to protect our nation from COVID-19 while ensuring that all people have access to life-saving vaccines and treatments."

"Today, 80-90% of vaccines administered have been in the developed world. If we are to make meaningful progress, we must ensure that developing and middle-income countries have access to vaccines and the ability to manufacture or produce vaccines for their own populations," the letter added.

The group stressed that a global pandemic "cannot be halted by the work of one nation alone, but requires many organizations and nations working together to ensure safe and effective vaccines are available to everyone everywhere to keep communities safe."

"A combination of financial support, vaccines, knowledge sharing and support services," the letter said, will strengthen the response to the global pandemic "so that all people and nations can be 'dignified agents of their own destiny.'"