

2003/05

TO ALL MAJOR SUPERIORS

Dear Fathers,

The peace of Christ!

The phenomenon of globalisation has brought to the fore issues transcending national boundaries, requiring a multi-disciplinary approach, and demanding rapid and well-informed responses. Networks and networking are important means of providing this type of response to issues like the burden of external debt on the poor, and ensuring the sustainability of development. The recent experience of Jesuits at the Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, and the practical knowledge acquired in the past by the Jesuit Refugee Service attest to the efforts already made by the Society of Jesus to respond in a more integrated manner to these new global challenges.

In 1995, the 34th General Congregation expressed several closely-related insights: first, that the Society of Jesus was already established or structured in such a way as to foment, even to require, networking in the carrying out of our mission (GC34, d.20, n.13). Secondly, that the Society's very nature as an international (or "universal") body represented an enormous untapped potential in this regard (GC34, d.20, n.5). Thirdly, that the development of networking in the Society could not easily be foreseen and would inevitably proceed by trial and error, although there was already some accumulated experience to reflect on (GC34, d.20, n.14).

The topic of networking was introduced at the Loyola meeting of Provincials, 2000, and the Social Justice Secretary was entrusted with the task of studying the reality of networking and suggesting some ways of proceeding. A draft was presented to the Moderators of Conferences of Major Superiors in 2001, and a second amended version at their meeting in September 2002. Today I am happy to send you the present *Guidelines on Jesuit Networking in the Social Area*, to share with whomever you think best in your Province. They will also be made available to the co-ordinators of the social apostolate and of the networks themselves.

It is a strength of these *Guidelines* that, for the sake of coherence, they limit themselves to the social sector. And yet it should be clear that much of what is said applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to networks in other sectors of the Society's mission.

As we are dealing with rapidly evolving phenomena, these *Guidelines* will require constant up-dating. Therefore I warmly invite anyone who has criticisms, corrections or suggestions to send them to the Social Justice Secretary, Fr. Fernando Franco.

In sending before you these *Guidelines* we hope to carry forward the insights of the 34th General Congregation, to build on the existing experience of many Jesuits, and to respond effectively to the complex challenges of today.

Fraternally in Christ,

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.
Superior General

Rome, 15 January 2003