



APPEAL TO COP 21 NEGOTIATING PARTIES

*The following appeal is issued by Cardinals, Patriarchs and Bishops from across the globe representing the continental groupings of national episcopal conferences. It is addressed to those negotiating the COP 21 in Paris and it calls on them to work toward the approval of a **fair, legally binding and truly transformational climate agreement.***

Representing the Catholic Church from the five continents, we Cardinals, Patriarchs and Bishops have come together to express, on our own behalf and on behalf of the people for whom we care, the widely-held hope that a just and legally binding climate agreement will emerge from the negotiations of the COP 21 in Paris. We advance a ten-point policy proposal, drawing on the concrete experience of people across the continents, and linking climate change to social injustice and the social exclusion of the poorest and most vulnerable of our citizens.

Climate Change: challenges and opportunities

In his encyclical letter, *Laudato si'* (LS), addressed 'to every person living on this planet' (LS 3), Pope Francis claims that '*climate change represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity today*' (LS 25). The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all (LS 23). The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone (LS 95).

Whether believers or not, we are agreed today that the earth is essentially a shared inheritance, whose fruits are meant to benefit everyone. For believers, this becomes a question of fidelity to the Creator, since God created the world for everyone. Hence every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged (LS 93).

Damage to climate and environment has enormous repercussions. The problem arising from the dramatic acceleration of climatic change is global in its effects. It challenges us to re-define our notions of *growth* and *progress*. It poses a *lifestyle* question. It is imperative that we find a solution that is consensual, because of the scale and global nature of the climate's impact, it invites a solidarity that is universal, a solidarity that is '*intergenerational*' and '*intragenerational*'. (LS 13, 14, 162)

The Pope defines our world as '*our common home*' and, in the exercise of our stewardship, we must keep in mind the human and social degradation which is a consequence of a damaged environment. We call for an integral ecological approach, we call for social justice to be placed centre stage '*so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*' (LS 49).

Sustainable development must include the poor

While deploring the dramatic impact of rapid climate change on sea levels, extreme weather events, deteriorating ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity, the Church is also witness to how climate change is affecting vulnerable communities and peoples, greatly to their disadvantage. Pope Francis draws our attention to the irreparable impact of unrestrained climate change in many developing countries across the world. Moreover, in his address to the United Nations the Pope said the misuse and destruction of the environment are also accompanied by a relentless process of exclusion.¹

Courageous Leaders seeking enforceable agreements

The building and maintenance of a sustainable common home requires courageous and imaginative political leadership. Legal frameworks are required which clearly establish boundaries and ensure the protection of the ecosystem (LS 53).

Reliable scientific evidence suggests that accelerated climate change is the result of unrestrained human activity, working to a particular model of progress and development, and that excessive reliance on fossil fuels is primarily responsible. The Pope and Catholic Bishops from five continents, sensitive to the damage caused, appeal for a drastic reduction in the emission of carbon dioxide and other toxic gases.

We join the Holy Father in pleading for a major break-through in Paris, for a comprehensive and transformational agreement supported by all based on principles of solidarity, justice and participation.² This agreement must put the common good ahead of national interests. It is essential too that the negotiations result in an enforceable agreement that protects our common home and all its inhabitants.

We, Cardinals, Patriarchs and Bishops, issue a general call and make ten specific policy proposals. We call on COP 21 to forge an international agreement to limit a global temperature increase to within those parameters currently suggested from within the global scientific community to avoid catastrophic climatic impacts, especially on the poorest and most vulnerable communities. There is, we agree, a common but also differentiated responsibility of all nations. Different countries have reached a different stage on the development spectrum. The need to work together in a common endeavour is imperative.

Our ten calls:

1. to keep in mind not only the technical but particularly the ethical and moral dimensions of climate change as indicated in Article 3 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2. to accept that climate and atmosphere are global common goods that are belonging to all and meant for all.

¹ Address of the Holy Father, United Nations Headquarters, New York, Friday 25 September 2015.

² Address of the His Holiness Pope Francis to the Environment Ministers of the European Union, Vatican City, 16 September 2015.

3. to adopt a fair, transformational and legally binding global agreement based on our vision of the world that recognises the need to live in harmony with nature, and to guarantee the fulfilment of human rights for all, including those of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and workers.
4. to strongly limit a global temperature increase and to set a goal for complete decarbonisation by mid-century, in order to protect frontline communities suffering from the impacts of climate change, such as those in the Pacific Islands and in coastal regions.
 - to ensure that the temperature threshold is enshrined in a legally binding global agreement, with ambitious mitigation commitments and actions from all countries recognising their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDRRC), based on equity principles, historical responsibilities, and the right to sustainable development.
 - to secure that the emissions reductions by governments are in line with the decarbonisation goal, governments need to undertake periodic reviews of the pledges they make and of the ambition they show. And to be successful these reviews need also to be based on science and equity and shall be mandatory.
5. to develop new models of development and lifestyles that are climate compatible, address inequality and bring people out of poverty. Central to this is to put an end to the fossil fuel era, phasing out fossil fuel emissions, including emissions from military, aviation and shipping, and providing affordable, reliable and safe renewable energy access for all.
6. to ensure people's access to water and to land for climate resilient and sustainable food systems, which give priority to people driven solutions rather than profits.
7. to ensure inclusion and participation of the poorest, most vulnerable and impacted at all levels of the decision-making process.
8. to ensure that the 2015 agreement delivers an adaptation approach that adequately responds to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable communities and builds on local alternatives.
9. to recognise that adaptation needs are contingent on the success of mitigation measures taken. Those responsible for climate change have responsibilities to assist the most vulnerable in adapting and managing loss and damage and to share the necessary technology and knowhow.
10. to provide clear roadmaps on how countries will meet the provision of predictable, consistent, and additional finance commitments, ensuring a balanced financing of mitigation actions and adaptation needs.

All this would call for serious ecological awareness and education (LS 202-215).

Prayer for the Earth

God of love, teach us to care for this world our common home. Inspire government leaders as they gather in Paris to listen to and heed the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor; to be united in heart and mind in responding courageously; to seek the common good and protect the beautiful earthly garden you have created for us, for all our brothers and sisters, for all generations to come. Amen

BISHOP SIGNATORIES TO THIS DECLARATION:

HIS EMINENCE OSWALD CARDINAL GRACIAS

*Archbishop of Bombay, India
President of FABC (Asia)*

HIS GRACE ARCHBISHOP GABRIEL MBILINGI

*Archbishop of Lubango, Angola
President of SECAM (Africa)*

HIS EMINENCE PÉTER CARDINAL ERDŐ

*Archbishop of Esztergom –Budapest
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HIS GRACE ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH KURTZ

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HIS EMINENCE REINHARD CARDINAL MARX

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HIS EXCELLENCY BP. DAVID DOUGLAS CROSBY OMI

*Bishop of Hamilton, Canada
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HIS BEATITUDE BECHARA BOUTROS CARDINAL RAI

*Patriarch of Antioch (Maronite)
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