

Faith and Science: Towards COP26

Joint Appeal: Executive Summary

Today, after months of dialogue between faith leaders and scientists, we come together united to raise awareness of the unprecedented challenges that threaten our beautiful common home. Our faiths and spiritualities teach a duty to care for the human family and for the environment in which it lives. We are deeply interdependent with each other and with the natural world. We are not limitless masters of our planet and its resources. Multiple crises facing humanity are ultimately linked to a crisis of values, ethical and spiritual. We are caretakers of the natural environment with the vocation to care for it for future generations and the moral obligation to cooperate in the healing of the planet. We must address these challenges using the knowledge of science and the wisdom of religion. We must think long-term for the sake of the whole of humanity. Now is the time to take transformative action as a common response.

We need a framework of hope and courage. But we also need to change the narrative of development. Climate change is a grave threat. We advocate for common but differentiated climate action at all levels. The world is called to achieve net-zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, with wealthier countries taking the lead in reducing their own emissions and in financing emission reductions from poorer nations. All governments must adopt a trajectory that will limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We beg those nations with the greatest responsibility and present capacity to provide substantial financial support to vulnerable countries and to agree new targets to enable them to become climate resilient, and to adapt to and to address climate change. The rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be given special attention.

We appeal to governments to raise their ambition and their international cooperation to: favour a transition to clean energy; adopt sustainable land use practices; transform food systems to become environmentally-friendly and respectful of local cultures; end hunger; and to promote sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production. Full consideration must be given to the effects on the workforce of this transition. We call upon financial institutions, banks and investors to adopt responsible financing, and on civil society organisations and everyone to face these challenges in a spirit of collaboration.

For our part, we underline the importance of:

- deepening our efforts to bring about a change of heart among members of our traditions in the way we relate to the Earth and to other people;
- encouraging our educational and cultural institutions to strengthen and prioritise integral ecological education;
- participating actively in the public discourse on environmental issues;
- engaging our congregations and institutions with their neighbours to build sustainable, resilient and just communities;
- emphasising the importance of reducing carbon emissions;
- encouraging our communities to embrace sustainable lifestyles;
- striving to align our financial investments with environmentally and socially responsible standards; and
- evaluating the goods we purchase and the services we hire with the same ethical lens.

Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden: we must not leave a desert to our children. Scientists have warned us that there might be only one decade left to restore the planet. We plead with the international community, gathered at COP26, to take speedy, responsible and shared action to safeguard, restore and heal our wounded humanity and the home entrusted to our stewardship. We appeal to everyone to join us on this common journey.