

Global Catholic Letter to the COP28's Presidency

To the Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, President of COP28,

As global Catholic actors at the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (CoP28), we ask the CoP28 presidency to recognize the moral and ethical responsibility to institutionalize a practice of integral ecology in the creation of sustainable adaptation, mitigation, and implementation frameworks. As leaders, your decisions will determine the fate of our common home and the common good of present and future generations. In line with the thematic area of CoP28, “just transitions,” we call on leaders to adopt a multilateral and holistic vision of sustainability, one that addresses the needs and experiences of vulnerable communities in the transition to a post-coal, post-carbon future. Let us make CoP28 a historical event that builds upon the progress of past climate conferences, makes good on existing commitments, and begins a process of real systemic change. As Pope Francis wrote in his most recent apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum* (DM), CoP28 “can represent a change of direction, showing that everything done since 1992 was in fact serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved thus far” (LD 54).

1. Avoid Delay - Act Now

Facts/Evidence

The immediacy of climate change today is evident in the unprecedented acceleration of extreme weather events: hurricanes, flooding, fires; ecological degradation: deforestation, melting ice caps, oil spills; and the impact this has on people worldwide: displacement, famine, resource inaccessibility. The intensity of the climate crisis has forced people worldwide to reckon with this existential threat to mankind and our common home and our role in the origin and perpetuation of this threat.

Our perspectives

The theme of COP28 must be “climate action can’t wait.”¹ COP28 is an opportunity to chart a course of action to rapidly and dramatically reduce emissions, expand renewable power capacity, and invest in financing for adaptation and climate resilience. solutions are right in front of us. What is needed are the political and financial commitments to act decisively and swiftly to produce substantial changes. The consequences of inaction will only become more severe as time goes on. “Although the measures that we can take now are costly, the cost will be all the more burdensome, the longer we wait” (LD 56).

Our asks/demands

We implore all Parties to act swiftly and decisively to chart a course of action to reduce emissions and protect lives and livelihoods dramatically.

2. Accelerate the Transition to Clean Energy and Make It Just

Facts/Evidence

The past twelve months were Earth’s hottest months on record, with one in four people worldwide facing extreme, consistent, and dangerous heat waves driven by carbon pollution.² “The necessary transition towards clean energy sources such as wind and solar energy, and the abandonment of fossil fuels, is not progressing at the necessary speed. Consequently, whatever is being done risks being seen only as a ploy to distract attention.” (LD 55). Research shows that global renewable power capacity - including wind, solar, hydro, and geothermal energy - needs to triple by 2030.³

Our perspectives

1

https://www.un.org/climatechange/cop28?gclid=Cj0KCQiApOyqBhDIARIsAGfnyMoeA37Ow2QIudLTVlywnxhsPwq_A0AKZXabmki7vq0j-v9IcFalbV0aAs9gEALw_wcB

² Nature News (10.Nov.2023): [Earth just had its hottest year on record — climate change is to blame.](#)

³ IRENA (2023): [TRIPLING RENEWABLE POWER AND DOUBLING ENERGY EFFICIENCY BY 2030.](#) See also [this](#).

The science is clear that the world needs to prioritize a transition to clean energy sources if we are to limit global warming to a below 1.5°C temperature rise by the end of 2030 for the well-being of our planet and its people. Long-term transition to a fossil fuel-free world requires a holistic vision of sustainability, which addresses the needs and experiences of disproportionately vulnerable populations. An equitable approach to the clean energy transition is needed for social justice and effective and lasting implementation.

Our asks/demands

We must move from fossil fuels to accessible, affordable, and renewable clean energy for all. Parties should agree on a just transition framework with a set global renewables target: To triple global renewables capacity to 11,000 GW by 2030, deploying at least 1,500 GW per year by 2030.

3. Develop and Implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Facts/evidence

The latest IPCC Report states that a 43% reduction in CO₂ emissions is needed by 2030 and 84% by 2050 (based on 2019 emissions) to reach the 1.5°C target. One thing is clear: To have a decent chance of holding to the 1.5 °C limit, fossil fuel extraction must begin to decline immediately, phase down rapidly in the coming decades, and cease worldwide by 2050.

Our perspectives

We realize that too many coal mines and oil and gas wells are still operating, setting the world on course to fail to meet the Paris Agreement's goal of 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement text omits any reference to fossil fuels despite being the leading climate disrupter. Adopting a fossil fuel treaty will overcome this loophole in the Paris Agreement, leading to more concrete commitments in NDCs. All Parties could negotiate an internationally binding treaty that addresses fossil fuels as a root cause of the climate crisis. A treaty would hold our neighbors and our governments accountable. It would also ensure collaboration and cooperation. Our current infrastructure of

pipelines and mines perpetuates our dependence on dirty, dangerous, and expensive fossil fuels.

Our asks/demands:

All governments should adopt a parallel Fossil Fuels Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Fossil fuel extraction must be stopped urgently where it violates human rights, especially

the rights of indigenous peoples.

To leave highly dependent, poorer countries with enough carbon budget to phase out extraction in a reasonably just manner, less-dependent countries – which face much less challenging prospects – must phase out much more quickly. The least socioeconomically dependent countries (like Canada, the United States, Norway, Australia, and the UK) must end fossil fuel extraction by the early 2030s.

Wealthy countries must provide significant amounts of climate finance and international phase-out support to the transition in poorer, dependent countries

4. Commit to Concrete and Binding Agreements

Facts/evidence

This year's COP marks a historic milestone in implementing the Paris Agreement as Parties will assess the results of the first Global Stocktake. In September 2023, the GST Technical Synthesis Report revealed that the world is falling short of achieving its goal of keeping global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.5 degrees Fahrenheit). The final phase of the GST takes place at COP28, where countries will be asked to ratchet up their emissions reduction targets as set out in their climate plans, their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

Our perspectives

As Pope Francis said, “If there is sincere interest in making COP28 a historic event that honors and ennobles us as human beings, then one can

only hope for binding forms of energy transition that meet three conditions: that they be efficient, obligatory, and readily monitored” (LD 59).

Our asks/demands

The GST outputs and related COP28 decisions must be forward-looking, proposing clear, actionable, and specific paths to get on track with the Paris goals, ensuring that a human rights-based approach, including the rights of Indigenous Peoples, takes into account social justice and inter-generational equity.

5. Ensure Transparency, Climate Funding, and Oversight

Facts/evidence

The conclusion of the first GST allows Parties to make bold political commitments that can drive revolutionary solutions across systems and sectors. However, as we have seen in past COPs, a lack of political will and oversight often leads to broad recommendations but little action.

Our perspectives

“Today, we can continue to state that “the accords have been poorly implemented due to lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review, and penalties in cases of noncompliance. The principles they proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation”. [32] Also, “international negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility” (LD 52)

Our asks/demands

Parties must agree on the comprehensive operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund and other equitable mechanisms for financing sustainable development.

6. Recognize the Interconnected Nature of the Crisis

Facts/evidence

By integrating the analysis of environmental and social changes, a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between climate change and society is gained. There is a need to evaluate whether our responses to these changes are equitable and to assess the impact of human responses at different scales, including local, national, and international levels.⁴

Our perspectives

Effective climate action and a just transition to a more sustainable future requires an approach considering how environmental, political, economic, and social issues are connected. Crises are never isolated events but rather exist within a pattern of complex everyday injustice produced by uneven power dynamics and reinforced by processes that normalize and institutionalize these inequalities.

“Our world has become so multipolar and, simultaneously, so complex that a different framework for effective cooperation is required. It is not enough to think only of balances of power but also of the need to provide a response to new problems and to react with global mechanisms to the environmental, public health, cultural, and social challenges, especially to consolidate respect for the most elementary human rights, social rights and the protection of our common home. It is a matter of establishing global and effective rules that can permit “providing for” this global safeguarding.” (LD 42)

Pope Francis popularized the concept of “integral ecology” in his encyclical *Laudato Si* in 2015, which emphasizes the relationship between ecological and social issues and acknowledges the interconnection of environmental, economic, and cultural factors when promoting a vision of social justice.

⁴ Graham, S., Wary, M., et al. An interdisciplinary framework for navigating social-climatic tipping points. *People and Nature* (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.10516>

Our asks/demands

“To seek only a technical remedy to each environmental problem which comes up is to separate what is in reality interconnected and to mask the true and deepest problems of the global system” (LD 57). Addressing climate change in a lasting and just way requires policymaking to recognize the complex and entrenched structural causes of climate-related crises.

7. Embrace our brothers and sisters who are already suffering; the social and human dimension

Facts/evidence

Climate change is already disrupting the lives of people who are least responsible for its perpetuation. It is generating losses and damages. Some of these losses and damages are economic; others are ‘non-economic’ - the latter have been neglected in climate policy. Non-economic are the intangible things like health, territory, environment, and cultural heritage that are important in people’s lives, giving them meaning and dignity.

Our perspectives

Global environmental justice and the development of a more equitable and sustainable future require bottom-up approaches that disrupt the normative power structure and elevate perspectives from those other than powerful stakeholders with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. Accordingly, to avoid reaffirming processes and discourses that justify and encourage unsustainable development practices, we can transform power inequalities and their normalization by empowering vulnerable communities to have more political and social agency to address the causes of climate change. The priority should be to shrink our global carbon footprint while leaving no one behind.

Our asks/demands

“Every little bit helps, and avoiding an increase of a tenth of a degree in the global temperature would already suffice to alleviate some suffering for many people. Yet what is important is something less quantitative: the need to realize that there are no lasting changes without cultural changes,

without a maturing of lifestyles and convictions within societies, and there are no cultural changes without personal changes.” (LD 70)

Conclusion

As Catholics, we are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in a relationship with all of God’s creation for our common home and the common good. We are guided by Pope Francis’ Laudate Deum and by our own experiences and perspectives as concerned citizens of the world we all share. Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, we entrust our hopes and dreams for a better world to you. Will you honor and ennoble humanity by taking these vital steps at COP28? The world is watching, and our future depends on your leadership.

