



Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation
佛教慈濟基金會美國總會

BUDDHIST TZU CHI FOUNDATION
DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
COP 25—MADRID, SPAIN
DECEMBER 2, 2019

WE the volunteers, staff, and members of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, disciples of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, recognize the role of climate change and its effect on the planet Earth and on all sentient lifeforms on our common Home. It is the primary cause of the severe weather catastrophes--wildfires, severe tropical storms, and floods--droughts and famines, and devastation of ecosystems. It has melted the permafrost of the Arctic regions, causing sea levels to rise and releasing millions of tons of methane into the atmosphere, exacerbating the crisis. It endangers the lives of the hundreds of millions living in forests, small islands, and coastal regions. It has sparked the conflicts that have forcibly displaced millions more. It has created the ideal conditions, in regions that were previously too cold, for the breeding of mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas, leaving millions more vulnerable to Zika, West Nile virus, yellow fever, chikungunya, dengue fever, malaria, and other vector-borne diseases. These are the effects of a world at 1.1°C above pre-industrial levels, and already, we are witness to unprecedented suffering. The most optimistic of the estimates limit warming by 1.5°C before 2100--the goal set by the Paris Agreement to prevent catastrophe--at a global economic cost of trillions and the unwavering commitment of all countries to transition to a zero-carbon infrastructure. In a more likely scenario, assuming countries adhere to their commitments made in the Paris Agreement, we will see a rise of 3.5-4 °C before 2100. According to the International Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) Special Report on 1.5°C, if significant reductions in carbon emissions are not met by 2030, it would not be possible to reach our target of preventing catastrophic climate change. It is the responsibility of governments, civil society, businesses, and all the inhabitants of the planet Earth, to the sentient nonhuman lifeforms that we coexist with on this planet--innocent to the horrors we routinely inflict upon them, to the indigenous populations of the world--those whose humble lifestyles contribute little to the suffering they are subjected to, and to the future generations who will look back on the actions we take today as the root of the world they live in.

We, of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, in our mission to relieve suffering worldwide, have come to the aid of the millions affected by climate change, both directly and indirectly, through the provision of food,



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shelter, daily supplies, medical care, and financial assistance to refugees, homeless, disaster-affected, and other vulnerable populations. We recognize that climate change is the result of greed, apathy, and ignorance which are ingrained within the societal infrastructures that govern modern civilization--one built on a foundation without foresight. It is bound within human nature and inherent in our daily habits, the persistent, lifelong drive towards convenience, efficiency, and comfort, leading to an overconsumption of energy, resources, and food, and an overgeneration of waste. In recognition of the role of individual lifestyle on the environment, we aim, through actions and education, to change the habits and behaviors of those we influence. We advocate for a carbon-neutral lifestyle--one of plant-based diets, self-sustenance, low-waste, and low-energy usage; a way of living where stewardship of the Earth is paramount in all aspects. Through a worldwide change of mindsets, habits, and lifestyles, a systematic and societal shift will naturally follow; consumer demands drive the flow of the economy, influence the practices of businesses, and pressure governments to take action. In order to avert global disaster, all people must, in harmonious collaboration, be mindful of their actions and instill compassionate wisdom into their way of life.

We, of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, in recognition of the critical role of political action and system change, in combination with collective behavioral change, call upon the member-states, the bodies of the UNFCCC, civil society, and constituencies to collaborate in effective action.

- **We welcome the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C.** *We accept the implicit conclusions of this important report as true and a warning sign for things to come if we do not act. In response to this report, we commit to drastic actions to significantly reduce our carbon footprint. We strongly urge the countries of the world to do the same.*
- **We thank the Government of Spain for agreeing to host the 25th Conference of Parties.** *We are sympathetic towards Chile's plight and wish the country a peaceful and harmonious conclusion to its internal disputes. In these crucial times, we cannot delay these important negotiations for even a day. We are grateful for Spain's rapid agreement to host COP 25 to eliminate any delay in the progress of these negotiations.*
- **We applaud the 195 signatories to the Paris Agreement, especially the 187 members which have ratified it.** *In accordance with global harmonious collaboration, we are pleased to witness, for the first time in history, the agreement of all the world's countries, to acknowledge the climate crisis. However, the Agreement, in its watered-down state, continues to be met with strong resistance, both from parties that say the Agreement is not enough to solve our problems and*



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those which refuse to acknowledge the responsibility to take action. More must be done to win over the people of the world, transforming the reality in which we live to a world we envision.

- **We call for significantly more ambitious commitments from Parties to the Agreement in 2020.** *According to the IPCC SR 15 report, the world is currently on track to see a rise of roughly 4°C if all Parties commit to their current NDC submissions--a disastrous outcome for all life on Earth. In order to reach our ultimate goal of 1.5°C, countries must set aside ambitions of economic prosperity and instead focus on ambitions of sustainability, adaptability, and environmental stewardship.*
- **We strongly urge the decision-making bodies to adopt a more robust mechanism for adaptation to prepare for the coming disasters ahead.** *The political mechanisms that govern the world can no longer be reactionary, but rather, one built on a framework of anticipation and preparedness. This may include, but is not limited to: the establishment of the status of climate-refugees and implied protections to be guaranteed by the host countries; the advancement of artificial intelligence and predictive analytics to anticipate incoming disasters to allow for ample preparation time and strategic planning; the establishment of the necessary financial mechanisms that would generate enough allocated funds to protect wildlife and ecosystems, rebuild infrastructures and homes, and install necessary emergency response measures; and the focus on disaster risk reduction through community preparation and the strengthening of infrastructure.*
- **We call on the decision-making bodies to adopt strategic and inclusive policies.** *Political mechanisms that determine the world's actions on climate change should not solely rely on simple feedback loops and rigid terms; it needs to be robust enough to be effective, yet flexible enough to adapt to changes. It is vital that policies protect vulnerable populations--women, children, elderly, and marginalized groups -- in order to ensure trust that governments have the safety and security of the people in mind. Policies that negatively affect a person's wellbeing in any way at any scope is sure to be met with harsh resistance.*
- **We call on the countries of the world to shift towards a clean, renewable energy infrastructure.** *In these modern times, energy-use is unavoidable; societal infrastructures are heavily reliant on energy, and livelihoods are significantly improved on a global scale. Solar energy, wind energy, hydroelectric power, and other alternative sources of clean, renewable energy must all be used in an environment in which they are most suitably used; coal and natural gas industries must take corporate responsibility by finding a way to justly transition towards*



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renewable energy by retraining their employees and changing their energy production methods, NOT towards false solutions, but towards a true zero-carbon energy infrastructure.

- **We call on the countries of the world to focus on ensuring prosperity and happiness for all of its citizens.** *Because of desperation, economic hardships, political distrust, and anti-globalization sentiments, many countries face extreme resistance towards any attempts at a shift towards a green infrastructure. Ultimately, especially in times of desperation, it is human nature to prioritize one's own self-interests before serving the interest of all; countries must ensure economic prosperity of all in order to peacefully progress towards a green infrastructure.*
- **We call on the countries of the world to promote the advancement of scientific research and technologies that would improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and sequester greenhouse gases.** *Current trends in technology focus on pushing the limits of convenience and marketability with little foresight for the impacts of the aforementioned technological advancements. Consumer technologies must advance towards energy efficiency and waste reduction. Industries, particularly in agriculture and energy production, must be conscious of the environmental impacts of their practices, and consumers have the power to incentivize this behavior. The private and public sectors must reduce their reliance on air travel.*
- **We call on the decision-making bodies of the UNFCCC to take into consideration and respect the inputs of the different constituencies in the process and negotiations.** *Each constituency is capable of making major contributions and have every right to be part of the decision-making process. The most effective solutions take into consideration all perspectives. Respect for these inputs, and for the perspectives from which they represent, gives them the necessary weight to influence the change required for a just and equitable transition.*
- **Lastly, we call on all who share our common home to cultivate the innate notions of gratitude, love, and respect.** *In these trying times, conflict, animosity, and distrust towards the other dominates our conversation. Negativity and spite is fed into a feedback loop in today's society, disrupting any and all attempts at progress. Understanding and respect, regardless of perspectives, opens minds and hearts. Love and compassion towards the fellow man are the driving force behind selfless thoughts, leading to actions which prioritize the good of all over the good of the self. Gratitude grounds our mindset in satisfaction for what we have, away from self-entitlement which leads to a bottomless pit of desire. The survival of our species relies on selfless giving, willingness to compromise our infinite desires, and harmonious relationships between all people.*



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We, of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, in recognition of the drastic actions of all parties required to reach our goal of 1.5°C, COMMITTS to drastic internal and operational changes within the organization worldwide.

- **WE COMMIT to an enhanced use of technology in order to increase operational efficiency and to reduce carbon emissions.** *Tzu Chi will transition its technological infrastructure to one with a strong emphasis on predictive analytics, enhanced data analysis for decision-making, automation, and virtual collaboration. By 2030, Tzu Chi shall justly increase its operational efficiency by 50% in the interest of reducing its carbon footprint.*
- **WE COMMIT to eliminating unnecessary paper usage.** *Tzu Chi, in recognition of the important role that trees have on carbon sequestration, commit to eliminating paper usage in all functioning operations. By 2030, Tzu Chi shall reduce its paper usage by 90% through the use of web-based forms, cloud-based data collection, and digital accounting measures.*
- **WE COMMIT to eliminating inefficient and unnecessary travel and aim to make any and all trips made as productive as possible.** *Tzu Chi, in recognition of the harmful effects of air travel on the climate, vows to eliminate its reliance on air travel by increasing the number of local bases, increased use of web-based collaboration and meetings, and the encouragement of ground- and sea-based transportation whenever possible. By 2030, Tzu Chi shall reduce all air travel by 50%.*
- **WE COMMIT to transitioning all major Tzu Chi offices and buildings to green standards.** *By 2030, Tzu Chi intends to refit its structures and buildings to include: water recycling systems, reduced reliance on energy using natural lighting, ventilation, and cooling architecture.*
- **WE COMMIT to sustainable production, consumption, and waste reduction of all goods, particularly in food.** *Tzu Chi is committed to sustainable development pathways, including the engagement into sustainable agriculture and food production, the adoption of plant-based dietary patterns, and the reduction/elimination of food waste.*
- **WE COMMIT to the reduction in plastic waste and promotion of a circular economy.** *Through continual innovations in recycling technologies, influence on cultures and policies, and the efforts of thousands of volunteers of the same mind, we will continue to strive for the elimination of plastic waste*
- **WE COMMIT to the establishment of research programs to progress advancement in mitigation and adaptation.** *By 2030, Tzu Chi commits to initiate advanced research in: renewable clean energy, negative emissions technology solutions, carbon capture, disaster preparedness and early warning systems, and disaster prediction in its Universities.*



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- **WE COMMIT to educating our local communities on the impacts of climate change, what causes it, and what each and every individual can do to prevent its worst effects.** *Through the use of its media outlets, networks, and community outreach operations, Tzu Chi commits to educating its local communities on climate change--what it is, what causes it, how to prepare for its worst effects, and what one can do to mitigate it. Only through education can we combat ignorance and only through awareness can one be cognizant of the impacts of his or her own actions.*
- **WE COMMIT to developing programs that promote climate action and disaster/emergency preparedness.** *Tzu Chi, as an organization in humanitarian aid and development, shall henceforth commit to focus on ensuring its development programs include the promotion of low-carbon development, including the promotion of renewable energy in developing countries, agriculture resiliency, nature-based solutions, and more.*

We, of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, hope all businesses, institutions, government agencies, and other nonprofit organizations commit to similarly drastic changes towards the progress of sustainable development. In the interest of the survivability of the human race, we must ALL do our part, without compromise, hesitation, and conflict, to reduce our GHG emissions by 50% by 2030.