

Faith for Climate: A Call to Action

Dubai: December 4, 2023

Inspired by the Interfaith Statement signed by Pope Francis, Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, and around 30 religious leaders and representatives from a range of traditions, launched on December 3, the Faith Pavilion at COP28 puts forth this Call to Action.

We come from different faiths, religions, and spiritual backgrounds. We come from the North and the South, from the East and the West. We represent different communities, united in our longing for a more sustainable and inclusive world.

Though we come from varied traditions, we understand that the climate crisis is fundamentally a human crisis. Human actions, distorted by vices such as greed and selfishness, have brought humanity and the planet to the brink of disaster. By cultivating healthy values, which are taught and practiced in our traditions, we can find balance, and heal our common life, and protect Mother Earth.

Our common values inspire and unite us in our efforts to combat the human-made climate crisis and to nurture the sacredness and well-being of all life on Earth. Love for our world and for each other, and awareness of our interconnectedness, underpin our understanding and our commitment to urgent action.

Every sector of human endeavor – government, multilateral entities, business, health care systems, educational, cultural and artistic institutions – all contribute to the good effort needed now to bring about balance and healing. The religions of the world do not own spiritual values, but they make them the center of their lives. The religious communities bring to the work of climate action and advocacy, among other contributions, their values. This call to action expresses several areas of climate justice that are urgent. No less urgent is the call for us to change our thinking and replace our unhealthy values with those that lead to an integrated, balanced life, a life shared with all people and species.

We call for transformation rooted in shared and unifying values

Spiritual and religious communities account for the vast majority of the world's population. Our commitment to the well-being of the planet, and of present and future generations, is fundamentally an ethical pact. If our actions are motivated by greed, indifference, and apathy towards one another and the Earth, overconsumption will continue to harm our sole life-support system.

As communities dedicated to addressing environmental destruction and climate change, we take part in negotiations, policy-making, advocacy, and public mobilizations. In these, we affirm that actions and activities rooted in shared values of compassion, love, modesty, interconnectedness and justice are vital to achieve genuine, enduring change.

We are aware of our responsibility for the common good, and in good will we remind parties of their responsibility to make this COP28 a conference that is rooted in the ambition of limiting global warming to 1.5C and to equity.

These shared values may be expressed in different policies and proposals at different times. At COP28, we have an opportunity to make significant progress on the thematic foci, by day, of the COP, such as: finance, loss and damage, adaptation, mitigation, gender equity, youth, children, education and skills, and nature, land use, and oceans.

We appreciate the progress already made at COP28, but are aware of much left to be agreed.

We call for world and local leaders and policy makers to:

- Prioritize a just transition to a green economy
- Commit to the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty
- Prioritize the protection of species and ecosystems
- Provide new and sustained funding and new forms of access for the Green Climate Fund
- Extend funding for, and secure inclusive access to, the Loss and Damage Fund

Why do we prioritize these areas of action?

A just transition to a green economy is one which respects the dignity and value of each human being. This transition must put at the center the needs of the most vulnerable, who currently suffer the inequalities of a model of progress based on consumption and growth. Until 2030 our transition towards a green economy must involve halving its CO₂-levels. No one should be excluded from the benefits that flow from the development of a greener economy. The logic of our current economic model needs to be replaced in order to shift from progress to development for all. The transition to sustainability must be equitable for all.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is insufficient; we must urgently stop the expansion of fossil fuel production. The Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty (FFNPT) unequivocally calls for a phase-down and eventual cessation of fossil fuel production. We encourage faith communities worldwide to become part of the FFNPT. All parties to the Paris Agreement are urged to agree to a binding and universal phase-out of coal, oil and gas within a COP28 decision so that our energy systems become renewable and more just.

We believe that protecting species and ecosystems is vital, both for the welfare of human communities and animals and because of the inherent value they hold. Our traditions respect and value the life of the world for its own sake, not solely for the enhancement and protection of humanity.

Promises have been made to support the people and nations who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, yet have done the least to cause it. Funding the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Loss and Damage Fund to support adaptation and mitigation aligns with our commitment to honesty and truth – spiritual values that underpin collective promises. While fully funding the GCF is crucial, we also support a simultaneous assessment of the GCF in terms of access to the Fund, creating innovative funding structures that better meet the needs of the phase of the climate crisis today.

We call for effective global governance to tackle climate change and a positive vision

The climate crisis transcends national and regional boundaries and affects the whole of humanity. More effective global collaboration and governance is vital to meet the scale of this challenge. Such collaboration should include strengthening commitments from member states and multilateral bodies to the well-being of the planet, not just to their own domestic interests. Additionally, enforceable mechanisms to ensure that commitments made will be kept should be put in place.

Our vision is that the well-being of humans, animals, and nature will be the central indicator of progress, rather than a sole focus on linear economic income and growth. A binding Holistic Well-being Index could assess development and prosperity in this way. The creation of this index requires a paradigm shift towards cyclic thinking, and an interdisciplinary, global approach, which also considers the wisdom of our traditions.

Since all people depend on our shared world to live and flourish, people from all segments of society should have a voice in decisions about its future. When the rich tapestry of humanity has the opportunity to participate in policy-making, the results will be better informed and more widely owned.

We honor Indigenous Peoples

We seek to honor Indigenous Peoples, who, despite at times unimaginable oppression and violence, have upheld world views that recognize the interconnectedness of the Earth we all share. We are deeply grateful for their courage and their continued resilience. Their wisdom replenishes our commitment, and we pledge to stand alongside them as allies, in unwavering solidarity.

We call for responsibility and recommitment

A sustainable future, in which all people live with dignity, is possible if we commit to consuming and producing less, especially in countries which are responsible for high levels of CO₂ emissions.

To decisively reduce emissions, we advocate for a conscientious review of global and individual priorities along a commitment to reduce the carbon footprint at all levels, including the public sector, industry, businesses and digital services, military, aviation, aeronautics, and in our own private lives.

True change also demands accountability and responsibility for actions taken or not taken. Therefore, we advocate for neutral, objective, and forceful accountability measures which hold complicit nations and institutions to account for harmful action, delay or inaction.

We also acknowledge the unfortunate complicity of people acting in the name of religion in empire-building and colonialism over many centuries and into the modern era. These activities have brought us perilously close to ecological collapse. Consequently, our own religious communities require healing, spiritual awakening and recommitment to our core values and ideals.

Each of our traditions embraces dynamic processes of transformation and restoration. Rituals of lament, sorrow, repentance, recommitment, and renewal, can guide us all – religious and secular, civil society and government – as we chart a path forward.

Our hope for COP28 and beyond

This interfaith call to action is extended as an expression of hope rooted in reality. We call attention to the extreme urgency of this moment. The climate science community has pointed out how quickly Earth's systems have reached tipping points. We know that at COP28, ambitious action is needed to hold to the ceiling of 1.5° C that may protect life today and in the future.

Therefore, we add our energy, our prayers and our action to the voices of all the different sectors, to call together for ambitious advocacy, action and agreement on climate change at COP28 and beyond.

We invite individuals and organizations to sign onto this Call to Action!

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Liv58ja4dlMInMRC-GjQ7HP1drO_2MQD_RJvNkR6jnY/viewform?edit_requested=true

The COP28 Faith Pavilion

The first-ever Faith Pavilion at a UN Climate Change Conference is hosted by the Muslim Council of Elders in collaboration with the COP28 Presidency, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and a diverse coalition of global partners including the Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development, the Episcopal Diocese of California, the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), the Peace Department, and over 50 faith organizations.

Situated at the heart of COP28, adjacent to the World Climate Action Summit and negotiations zones, the Faith Pavilion hosts more than 65 sessions with over 300 speakers from 55 countries. It brings together religious and other civil society representatives, Indigenous Peoples, scientists, youth, and political leaders. The Pavilion symbolizes global and multifaith collaboration in addressing the human-made climate emergency. It facilitates intergenerational dialogue, furthers the role of religion and spirituality in the climate movement, and advocates for long-term, holistic solutions to protect the Earth and its climate. The Pavilion provides a unique opportunity for faith-based engagement with key stakeholders, including political delegations, decision makers, negotiators, and business leaders to ensure swift and effective climate action.

Organizers of the COP28 Faith Pavilion

The Muslim Council of Elders is an independent international organization that aims to promote peace within Muslim communities and between Muslim communities and non-Muslim communities. The Council unites Muslim scholars, experts, and dignitaries internationally recognized for their wisdom, understanding of justice, independence, and

moderation.

<https://www.muslim-elders.com/en>

The Faith for Earth Coalition of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) promotes faith leadership, faith-based organizations, and communities as custodians of far-reaching, value-based perspectives on environmental sustainability.

<https://www.unep.org/about-un-environment/faith-earth-initiative>

The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development connects religion and ecology and galvanizes faith communities' action and teaching on environmental sustainability.

<https://interfaithsustain.com/>

The Episcopal Diocese of California, also known as the Episcopal Church in the Bay Area, serves a diverse community of faith encompassing the greater San Francisco Bay Area.

<https://www.diocal.org>

The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) convenes governments, multilateral entities, academia, religious and other civil society actors to amplify contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

<https://www.partner-religion-development.org>

The Peace Department is a non-profit, designed to achieve peace through sustainable development and tackles the greatest threats to peace, including climate change, inadequacy in global coordination, resource scarcity, social and economic inequity.

<https://www.peacedepartment.global>