

An Interfaith Earth Day message in times of Covid 19 and Climate Emergency

Inter-faith group active at UNFCCC conferences response to the postponement of the COP26 - 22nd of April, Earth Day

As faith-based organisations and movements calling for fair and just policies able to tackle the climate emergency, we understand and support the UNFCCC decision to postpone COP26 in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting the whole of humanity. We nevertheless call on ourselves and on all stakeholders to not delay ambitious and urgent climate action.

We see the trauma, anxiety, vulnerability and loss of life around the world caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among already vulnerable communities. We are appalled by the increase in human rights violations, including racism, extreme surveillance, xenophobia, misuses of emergency powers and domestic violence.

We remain hopeful as we see people of all faiths and across all borders rising to a powerful call of solidarity, kindness, and support, adjusting our lives for the greater good, looking into creative and simple solutions to show care for one another. We also witness more time for reflection.

We proclaim loudly that we were already living in a state of emergency prior to COVID-19. We have a responsibility to ensure we do not return to behaviours which, as the current crisis has shown, leave the vast majority extremely vulnerable to hardship and suffering after only a few weeks of economic stagnation. Here we see the role of faith in learning from the COVID-19 crisis and to advocate for a just recovery to build a healthier future where the human family lives in a way that respects nature and Mother Earth on which we all depend.

The choices we now make will shape our society for years and it is crucial that efforts to rebuild economies put people's health before profit. Governments have pledged extraordinary amounts of money to prevent economic disasters because of this pandemic, but that money must not be used to finance future environmental degradation. We must not return to relaunching fossil fuel subsidies and unhealthy consumption patterns. The plans for a just recovery from COVID-19 must take into account the necessary measures to tackle climate change with a managed, planned and fair approach. We call for a rebuilding which upholds the human rights, health and wellbeing of citizens as critical to the stability and security of all countries.

We are moved by our faiths to see beyond this moment of fear and call on solidarity, community action and moral courage. We call on the UNFCCC, all governments and all people, to build a sustainable, just and healthy society that is resilient in times of crises such as COVID-19 and climate change, and to act early enough to prevent greater hardship and suffering in the future. This is the time to create a healthier and more resilient society together.