

STATEMENT BY RELIGIOUS AND FAITH LEADERS ON THE OCCASION OF THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL'S HIGH LEVEL SIGNATURE CEREMONY FOR THE PARIS AGREEMENT

Ahead of the Paris Agreement Signing Ceremony at the United Nations Headquarters on 22nd April 2016, as religious and spiritual leaders, we stand together to urge all Heads of State to promptly sign and ratify the Paris Agreement.

Caring for the Earth is our shared responsibility. Each one of us has a "moral responsibility to act," as so powerfully stated in the Pope's Encyclical and the climate change statements by Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and other faith leaders.¹ The planet has already passed safe levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Unless these levels are rapidly reduced, we risk creating irreversible impacts putting hundreds of millions of lives, of all species, at severe risk. The challenges ahead require honesty and courage and we all must take action to reduce emissions.

Humanity is at a crucial turning point. We as faith communities recognize that we must begin a transition away from polluting fossil fuels and towards clean renewable energy sources. It is clear that for many people significant lifestyle changes will have to be made. We must strive for alternatives to the culture of consumerism that is so destructive to ourselves and to our planet.

The unprecedented consensus resulting in the adoption of the Paris Agreement, welcomed by faith communities the world over, has opened up a new path towards a low-carbon, climate resilient transformation of the global economy. The global collaboration by all nations is proof that our shared values are far greater than any differences that divide us. It demonstrates that the sense of collective responsibility shared by all nations and society is far more powerful than the recklessness and greed of the few.

We are united in our support for the full and ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement and of all other decisions adopted at COP 21. To achieve the 1.5C goal, governments must accelerate climate action before 2020 and also greatly increase the level of ambition of the future Nationally-Determined Contributions (NDCs), rapidly converting them into national policies, law and programmes. These commitments must be defined by increasing ambition outlined in national roadmaps on how to transform our societies and economies by 2050 and clearly integrated into national development plans. We recognise the importance of peaking of global emissions by 2020, rapid phasing out of all fossil fuel subsidies and a transition to 100 per cent renewable energies by 2050. Finally, we note that more progress on the scaling up of finance, particularly for adaptation and loss and damage, is required so as to help vulnerable countries better prepare for climate impacts and to help us all in our transformation to a safe, zero carbon future.

Climate change presents our global family with the opportunity to embark on a path of spiritual renewal defined by greater awareness and ecological action. Every act to protect and care for all beings connects us to one another, deepening the spiritual dimension of our lives. We must reflect on the true nature of our interrelationship to the Earth. It is not a resource for us to exploit at our will. It is a sacred inheritance, the sustainer of all life on Earth. United with the shared hope that arises from faith, we the undersigned believe that the means, desire, and will to care for Earth and all life can and will become action as our political leaders ratify the promises made in Paris - and thus safeguard the greater promises of this generation and of all those to come.

We therefore:

- Urge governments to rapidly sign, ratify and implement the Paris Agreement, and to increase pledges to reduce emissions in line with keeping the global temperature rise to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels;
- Insist on rapid emissions reduction and peaking by 2020, in order to keep the 1.5C limit within reach;
- Strongly advocate the greater flows of finance, especially for adaptation and loss and damage;

¹ Key recent faith statements on climate change include: Sikh Statement on Climate Change, September 18th, 2014 (www.arcworld.org/downloads/Sikh-Statement-on-Climate-Change.pdf), Interfaith Summit Statement, September 21st 2014 (www.interfaithclimate.org), Lambeth Declaration 2015 on Climate Change, June 16th 2015 (www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2015/06/archbishop-of-canterbury-join-faith-leaders-in-call-for-urgent-action-to-tackle-climate-change.aspx), Pope Francis's Encyclical, Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home, June 18th 2015 (www.w2.vatican.va), the Islamic Climate Change Declaration, August 18th 2015 (www.islamicclimatedeclaration.org), the Statement of Faith and Spiritual Leaders, October 20th 2015 (http://actalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/COP21_Statement_englisch2.pdf), the Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders, October 29th 2015 (www.gbccc.org) and the Hindu Declaration on Climate Change, November 23rd 2015 (www.bhumiproject.org)

- Urge the swift phase out of all fossil fuel subsidies and transition from fossil fuels to 100% renewable energy by 2050;
- Encourage faith communities to reduce emissions in their homes, workplaces and centres of worship and to support and stand in solidarity with communities already impacted by climate change;
- Call for fossil fuel divestment and reinvestment in renewables, including within our own communities.

SIGNATORIES

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