

Bologna Interfaith Charter: Living Our Values, Acting for Our Common Home

As representatives of the world's largest religions, we share a sacred commitment to protect the environment and a moral responsibility to hold nations, corporations, and communities accountable for how they treat the planet. We have come together on the eve of the 2017 G7 Environment Ministers Meeting to redouble our collective resolve to protect the planet and to call upon leaders of the G7 to provide bold and decisive action to combat climate change and promote environmental protection. This Charter builds upon previous interfaith and individual statements from a diverse number of religious bodies across the world.

The Bologna G7 Environment Meeting is taking place at a moment of both great peril and great promise. With the Paris Agreement in danger, we must do everything possible to ensure its successful implementation. Due to the scale and pace of harm that has already been inflicted upon our planet, we are the last generation who can turn this crisis around before it is too late. At the same time, implementing climate change solutions creates new opportunities to improve human well-being and promote a more just economy.

Climate change and environmental destruction represent a grave threat to global development and human security as the mounting ecological crisis is inextricably linked to the global problems of poverty, migration, and unrest. Already the world has witnessed more frequent and intense droughts, floods, and natural disasters, along with the rise of sea-levels; with the most vulnerable and poor being hit the hardest. The dominant development paradigm, which has been built on fossil fuels and the unsustainable use of natural resources, has both caused and accelerated global warming and pollution.

Overwhelming scientific evidence warns us that climate change is human-caused and will have increasingly devastating consequences without ambitious mitigation to reduce the rise in global greenhouse gas emissions from human activities. We are anxious to engage in constructive dialogue with those who remain skeptical, including some within our own communities.

Our sacred texts and religious teachings are replete with injunctions to care for and protect the environment and ensure that our actions do not harm future generations. As our faith traditions affirm, the earth is not a commodity but rather a gift that we are called to sustain and safeguard for the sake of future generations. Averting our mounting ecological crisis will require both personal and spiritual conversion. Wherever politics fail, we will continue to change hearts and minds to generate the will and urgency to act. We will further utilize our pastoral, theological, and spiritual resources to educate, inspire and mobilize greater personal and communal commitment to care for and protect our planet. Our religious convictions and teachings can also shape new models of sustainable development that are rooted in social and ecological justice.

We welcome the Agenda 2030 as well as the Paris Climate Change Agreement as critical global frameworks for action. Countries that have emitted the most carbon dioxide as well as those with the greatest wealth are morally obligated to take the lead in climate protection. As a result, G7 countries have a historic responsibility and opportunity to lead by example in transforming their economies and helping those who are worst affected and most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation. Concretely, there is an urgent need to build resilience in vulnerable communities, to address climate induced loss and damage, and to dramatically reduce carbon emissions by scaling up climate finance, technology, innovation and green competitiveness.

We, as faith leaders and faith-based organizations, stand in solidarity with people and communities all over the world who are affected by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation and commit to galvanizing greater awareness and action that promotes more sustainable consumption and lifestyles and protects our natural environment, both on land and water.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis reminds the world that by “taking up these responsibilities and the costs they entail, politicians will inevitably clash with the mind set of short-term gain and results, which dominates present day economics and politics. But if they are courageous, they will attest to their God-given dignity and leave behind a testimony of selfless responsibility. (*Laudato si'*, 181). The world can no longer afford the politics of delay. We desperately need both courage and foresight that prioritizes long-term sustainability.

As Dr. Martin Luther King prophetically proclaimed over fifty years ago, “we are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there "is" such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.” It is not too late to limit the rise in global temperatures to below 1.5/2C by the end of the century, but it will require making the necessary investments in climate solutions and the political will to put in place transformative policies such as eliminating fossil fuel subsidies, putting a price on carbon, supporting climate-friendly agriculture and land-use, and building more resilient and efficient cities and communities. With the dramatic decreases in the cost of renewable energy due to innovation, building a sustainable economy represents both the moral and the economically smart path forward.

As religious and faith-based organization leaders we stand ready to work with G7 governments and publicly support your vigorous and positive action to combat climate change and protect our planet for this and future generations. We recognize and celebrate the commitments and actions already put forward by individuals, businesses, cities, and regional governments.

We hope this Charter leads to greater dialogue and action that can strengthen a growing Interfaith movement to combat climate change and protect the planet. We will be watching, working and advocating to ensure that great progress is made between now and when the G7 reconvenes in Canada in 2018. Now is the time to transition the world to a low carbon, resilient and sustainable economy.

Bologna, June 9, 2017