



The SDB Youth Ministry Department and DBI invite prayers for COP28

Statement | COP28

Today, 30 November, COP28 begins in Dubai, which will last until 12 December: a very important conference on Climate Change that will be attended by representatives from over 190 countries worldwide and 200 private companies and civil society organisations. As the Youth Ministry Department of the Salesian Congregation and DBI, we join in Pope Francis' prayers that this meeting will not just be an event, but will produce important commitments with lasting and sustainable effects for our planet and the whole of humanity. We also pray for the Holy Father, who for health reasons will not be able to attend the conference in person.

Indeed, we are aware of the scientific data, released by the IPCC in its latest report (2022):

- *Human-induced climate change, including more frequent and intense extreme events, has caused widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damage to nature and people, **beyond natural climate variability**. Across sectors and regions, the most vulnerable people and systems are observed to be disproportionately affected.*
- ***The vulnerability of ecosystems and people differs between regions**; approximately 3.3 to 3.6 billion people live in contexts that are highly vulnerable to climate change; human and ecosystem vulnerability travel together.*
- *Global warming, reaching +1.5°C in the near-term, would cause unavoidable increases in **multiple risks to ecosystems and humans**. The level of risk will also depend on near-term concomitant trends. Actions to limit global warming to close +1.5°C would substantially reduce projected losses and damages to human systems and ecosystems, compared to higher levels of warming, but cannot eliminate them all.*
- ***Beyond 2040 and depending on the level of global warming, climate change will lead to numerous risks to nature and humans**. Loss of biodiversity, damage and transformation of ecosystems are already key risks for each region but will continue to escalate with each increase in global warming. Risks to the availability of physical water and other water-related risks will continue to increase in the medium and long term in all regions examined, with the risk greater at higher levels of global warming.*
- ***The impacts and risks of climate change are becoming increasingly complex and difficult to manage**. Multiple climate hazards will occur simultaneously, and multiple climatic and non-climatic risks will interact, increasing complexity and cascading risks across sectors and regions.*
- ***Progress to date** in planning, adaptation and implementation in all regions and sectors **is generating multiple benefits**. However, to be effective, strategies must be long-term.*

*There are feasible and effective adaptation options which can reduce risks to people and nature. The feasibility of implementing adaptation options in the near-term differs across sectors and regions. The effectiveness of adaptation to reduce climate risk will decrease with increasing warming. **Integrated, multi-sectoral solutions that address social inequalities**, climate-risk differentiated, and cross-sectoral responses will increase the feasibility and effectiveness of adaptation across sectors.*

We appeal to the words of Pope Francis in his latest apostolic exhortation ***Laudate Deum***, and we want to commit ourselves to ensuring that what the Pope wishes for is realised:

4. Climate Conferences: Progress and Failures

44. For decades, representatives from over 190 countries have met periodically to address the climate issue. The 1992 Rio de Janeiro Conference led to the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), a treaty that took effect when the necessary ratification on



the part of the signatories concluded in 1994. These States meet annually in the Conference of the Parties (COP), the highest decision-making body. Some were failures, such as Copenhagen (2009), while others made it possible to take important steps forward, like COP3 in Kyoto (1997). Its significant Protocol set the goal of reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions by 5% compared to 1990. The deadline was 2012, but it was clearly not met.

46. Afterwards, it was proposed to create a mechanism regarding the loss and damage caused by climate change, which recognizes as those chiefly responsible the richer countries and seeks to compensate for the loss and damage that climate change produces in the more vulnerable countries. It was not yet a matter of financing the “adaptation” of those countries, but of compensating them for damage already incurred. This question was the subject of important discussions at various COPs.

47. COP21 in Paris (2015) represented another significant moment, since it generated an agreement that involved everyone. It can be considered as a new beginning, given the failure to meet the goals previously set.

48. The Paris Agreement presents an important long-term goal: to keep the increase of average global temperatures to under 2° C compared to preindustrial levels, and with the aim of decreasing them to 1.5° C. Work is still under way to consolidate concrete procedures for monitoring and to facilitate general criteria for comparing the objectives of the different countries. This makes it difficult to achieve a more objective (quantitative) evaluation of the real results.

49. Following several Conferences with scarce results, and the disappointment of COP25 in Madrid (2019), it was hoped that this inertia would be reversed at COP26 in Glasgow (2021).

50. COP27 in Sharm El Sheikh (2022) was from the outset threatened by the situation created by the invasion of Ukraine, which caused a significant economic and energy crisis. Carbon use increased and everyone sought to have sufficient supplies. Developing countries regarded access to energy and prospects for development as an urgent priority. It was clearly recognised that in reality combustible fuels still provide 80% of the world’s energy, and that their use continues to increase.

52. Today we can continue to state that, “the accords have been poorly implemented, due to lack of suitable mechanisms for oversight, periodic review and penalties in cases of noncompliance. The principles which they proclaimed still await an efficient and flexible means of practical implementation”. [32] Also, that “international negotiations cannot make significant progress due to positions taken by countries which place their national interests above the global common good. Those who will have to suffer the consequences of what we are trying to hide will not forget this failure of conscience and responsibility”. [33]

5. What is expected from COP28 in Dubai?

53. The United Arab Emirates will host the next Conference of the Parties (COP28). It is a country of the Persian Gulf known as a great exporter of fossil fuels, although it has made significant investments in renewable energy sources. Meanwhile, gas and oil companies are planning new projects there, with the aim of further increasing their production. To say that there is nothing to hope for would be suicidal, for it would mean exposing all humanity, especially the poorest, to the worst impacts of climate change.

54. If we are confident in the capacity of human beings to transcend their petty interests and think in bigger terms, we cannot give up dreaming that COP28 will lead to a decisive acceleration of the energy transition, with effective commitments that can be permanently monitored. This Conference can be a



turning point, proving that everything that has been done since 1992 was serious and worth the effort, or else it will be a great disappointment and jeopardize whatever good has been achieved thus far.

55. Despite the many negotiations and agreements, global emissions have continued to increase [...] In contrast, the necessary transition to clean energies, such as wind and solar power, and away from fossil fuels, is not progressing fast enough. As a result, what is being done risks being interpreted only as a distraction game.

56. We must move beyond the mentality of appearing to be concerned but not having the courage needed to produce substantial changes. We know that at this pace in just a few years we will surpass the maximum recommended limit of 1.5° C and shortly thereafter even reach 3° C, with a high risk of arriving at a critical point.

58. Once and for all, let us put an end to the irresponsible derision that would present this issue as something purely ecological, “green”, romantic, frequently subject to ridicule by economic interests. Let us finally admit that it is a human and social problem on any number of levels. For this reason, it calls for involvement on the part of all.

59. If there is sincere interest in making COP28 a historic event that honours and ennobles us as human beings, then one can only hope for binding forms of energy transition that meet three conditions: that they be efficient, obligatory and readily monitored. This, in order to achieve the beginning of a new process marked by three requirements: that it be drastic, intense and count on the commitment of all. That is not what has happened so far, and only a process of this sort can enable international politics to recover its credibility, since only in this concrete manner will it be possible to reduce significantly carbon dioxide levels and to prevent even greater evils over time.

60. May those taking part in the Conference be strategists capable of considering the common good and the future of their children, more than the short-term interests of certain countries or businesses. In this way, may they demonstrate the nobility of politics and not its shame. To the powerful, I can only repeat this question: “What would induce anyone, at this stage, to hold on to power, only to be remembered for their inability to take action when it was urgent and necessary to do so?” [\[35\]](#)

We invite all members of the Congregation, the Salesian family, and related organisations to pray that:

- the representatives of humanity decide on a rapid and fair transition to end the fossil fuel era, ending exploration and development of new projects, and redirecting funding and investment towards clean and renewable energies;
- each country decides to take its responsibility by reducing emissions and thus the further loss and damage that is already being felt in developing countries.
- governments do not hide behind carbon markets, which produce questionable and ineffective solutions from an emissions perspective;
- rich countries offer resources to developing countries so that they have access to clean energy, can adapt to the increasingly hot and dry climate, are compensated for the impacts they cannot adapt to and for the damage and losses they receive.

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