



UNANIMA International at COP28: Advocacy Statement

Journeying to COP 28

As we prepare for our journey to COP28 we are reminded of another journey at another time: the visit by Mary to Elizabeth in the gospel of Luke (LK:1, 63-64). What is clear from the story is that it is about relationships, and this relationship takes place in the context of a journey. The encounter bears witness to the urgency of the journey: “Mary went with haste.” We all now feel an urgency as we journey to Dubai for COP28.

We, Sisters of UNANIMA International have been on a journey together for the past year. We are convinced of the need to **coordinate**, **collaborate**, and **communicate** the distinctive voices of Catholic Sisters throughout the world at various UN and International Events. We are witnesses to a world that is in a fragile state, where there are poor, overlooked, and especially neglected women, children, and girls. As a group we want to see change. We want to raise our voices and demand that things must be different.

In a society where women were oppressed and denied their rights, Mary and Elizabeth created a “space” where they could share their stories, their experiences of God, and their hopes for a better future, and where they dared to prophesy and proclaim their respective visions of Liberation. Likewise, at this time in our history as we journey to COP28, we, religious women, have found in our faith, the hope and strength to struggle for justice, for dignity, and the right to participate in the creation of a better future for all people. Journey is for the people we represent who do not have voices. We are making ourselves available for this journey, showing solidarity with, and encouragement to women and girls in difficult circumstances, especially those furthest left behind in our world.

And here we are now preparing for our next encounter at the 28th Annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will run from November 30th to December 12th. These COP Conferences (Conference of Parties) have taken place yearly since 1995, except for 2020, which was postponed due to Covid. Over the years COP has traveled far and wide from Berlin to Buenos Aires, Kyoto, Cancun, Bali, Marrakesh, and Paris. The

aim of this annual event is the finessing of new agreements to see off the specter of climate change.

Why COP? The United Nations climate process has moved the needle when it comes to our response to climate change. When the UN climate treaty was first signed in 1992, it triggered a wave of national laws, policies and regulations that have rippled out across every country on earth. This process has started to shift every aspect of our modern economic system, especially the step away from 200 years of reliance on fossil fuels.

Why go to COP28? Some argue that a few hundred diplomats could manage the haggling over the UN official documents under negotiation. But it is worth noting the impact other participants can have, especially Religious. Like our work at the UN in New York, many new pledges and promises emerge on the sidelines of the official negotiations. These “coalitions of the willing” wish to make progress in specific sectors such as reducing methane emissions, halting deforestation, and green investment.

What needs to happen at COP28 in Dubai? Many are describing it as the “implementation COP” where we will hopefully begin to turn pledges and well-laid plans into action. There will be pressure for countries to come up with bolder measures to reduce their national emissions, and for wealthier nations to bring more money to the table when it comes to supporting the developing world. More support for adaptation, as well as financial help dealing with the loss and damage already wrought by climate change, will need to be addressed urgently.

The strapline for COP28 is: “partnership promotes progress” Implementation needs to happen “on time and at scale” and be “specific, measurable and impactful.” The key is financial assistance for developing countries. If their debt burden is not dealt with, these developing nations are left unable to invest in climate change mitigation or adaptation. Not only has the US\$100 billion a year from richer nations failed to materialize in full, it has also become clear that the most vulnerable countries are receiving little of what is available. Meanwhile, developing nations continue to go further into debt, as they are forced to spend vast sums of money on dealing with the impact of climate change, further hampering investment in emissions reduction and adaptation.

One of the targets for the Presidency of COP28 states that delivering climate finance to developing countries “needs a new mindset, and updated strategies and policies, especially in light of current financial crises, debt challenge and increasing interest rates.” Unlike previous COPs, this one is not aiming for a single negotiated outcome, but for

action at the national level. Many long-term veterans at COPs are saying that “this is no longer just a function of what the global community agrees.” Rather, it’s how the global community can work together to advance national interests and national agendas.

And where does this leave us as Religious Communities?

Religious communities and religious leaders have a significant role to play in addressing climate change and climate justice, which requires deep transformation within our communities and our societies. We already know what changes are needed to diminish long-term harm to our planet.

Our Call:

- Inspire our communities to be change agents for climate action, and sources for inspiring and motivating politicians and policy makers
- Enroll in the Laudato Si’ Action Platform
- Make lifestyle changes to reduce your environmental and carbon footprint
- Find, support, and join local or national movements that are asking for enhanced climate action
- Learn about other ways you can have influence

Conclusion

And ending as WE began with the visitation experience and our unique journey to COP28, like Mary and Elizabeth we journey first as listeners to hear sacred stories, and to be prophetic in our speech, and courageous in our actions at this global gathering. This sacred journey we are embarking upon on your behalf, and on behalf of those furthest left behind in our world. Like Mary and Elizabeth this journey will take us to unknown places in ourselves, with others, and with the global community.