

## **Global faith leaders call for urgent action on climate change**

Representatives of the world's religions have signed an appeal calling for political leaders at next month's COP28 climate summit to take meaningful action to respond to the urgent crisis of climate change.



**Christopher Wells - Abu Dhabi, *Vatican News*, 6 November 2023**

Professor Mohamed Al-Duweini, the representative of the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar; and Cardinal Pietro Parolin, representing Pope Francis, headed a delegation of almost thirty faith leaders who signed an appeal to COP28 delegates to take decisive action to combat climate change.

Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh, and Hindu leaders, along with representatives of other major religious traditions, joined in the appeal, which included calls for the acceleration of energy transitions, protection of the Earth, the transition to circular models of living in harmony with nature, and the rapid adoption of clean energy.

The appeal also included a commitment to supporting the first-of-its-kind 'Faith Pavilion' at COP28 and convening at future COP Conventions.

The signing ceremony took place in Abu Dhabi at the conclusion of the first day of the Global Faith Leaders Summit on Climate Change. Each of the leaders walked a path representing the equator and participated in the planting of a ghaf tree – the national tree of the UAE – before signing the document.

### **A powerful statement**

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the appeal was delivered to Dr. Sultan Al Jaber, the President-Designate of COP28.

Dr. Al Jaber highlighted the “special significance” of the Abu Dhabi Interfaith Statement for COP28. “Your collective faiths continue to inspire all people to live in harmony with nature and to act to protect our fragile world. And together, you have made a powerful statement of intent that the world needs to live – a statement of urgency, a statement of unity, solidarity, responsibility, and hope that can only help the collective drive for transformation and climate change.”

Dr. Al Jaber encouraged the faith leaders to continue to mobilize their communities around the world, while promising, on his part, “to carry your message forward to the world through COP28.”

### **United for change**

Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and a host of other religious traditions, large and small, were represented at the Global Faith Summit, with some three dozen speakers highlighting a shared commitment to caring for Creation.

Among the participants were representatives of Pope Francis, Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayyeb, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, and the Patriarch of Moscow, and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

They emphasized that all religious traditions recognize the relationship between divinity and creation. Common themes emerged, including the moral duty of stewardship, or caring for God’s creation; the need to work together to combat climate change; and the recognition of the urgency of the climate change crisis and the need to take decisive action to meet climate goals.

Participants pointed to greed and self-centredness as root causes of the environmental crisis, and called especially for wealthier nations, which bear greater responsibility for climate change, to make efforts to help poorer countries that are disproportionately affected by the crisis. Climate change, they said, is the gravest issue of our time, and requires urgent action to prevent catastrophe.

### **Raising awareness**

Recognizing that more than 80 percent of the total global population professes some religious belief, summit participants emphasized the important responsibilities incumbent on religious leaders to raise awareness of climate issues in their communities.

They, too, called for greater efforts to mobilize believers to take concrete actions to combat climate change – both through individual commitment to sound environmental practices, and through concerted efforts to advocate for concrete actions from world leaders to address the climate crisis.