



CIDSE JOINT STATEMENT

UN CLIMATE ACTION SUMMIT 2019

NEW YORK, 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

This is a [climate emergency](#). This is a social crisis. This is an environmental catastrophe. We have been procrastinating for too long, while the vulnerable suffer and our planet literally burns before our eyes. Like many public offices, Pope Francis [declared](#) a climate emergency on 14 June. Hundreds of thousands of youths and adults will unite to strike on 20 September, in front of the UN Climate Action Summit in New York and around the world. They deserve an answer and response to their calls. Current Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) barely [represent](#) a third of the emissions reduction needed to limit warming to 1.5°C and instead allow for over 3.5°C of warming. Leaders must heed the title of the summit, Climate Action, and fulfil their moral duty.

There is no lack of [ideas](#) – just, sustainable and well-researched – for governments to implement an ecological transition. Communities, social movements and civil society organisations have a wealth of expertise in innovative models of food and energy production proven to work at scale, such as agroecology and democratic renewable energy systems. Nature-Based Solutions – just one of the nine themes of the UN climate summit - can contribute significantly to staying within 1.5°C rise in average global temperatures by avoiding emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and losses of wetland ecosystems, restoring degraded land and scaling up agroecological food systems. There is no reason to resort to speculative, potentially catastrophic experimentation with geo-engineering. And we have serious concerns on other false ‘solutions’, such as climate-smart agriculture, large scale bioenergy (such as BECCS¹), hydrofuel, agrofuels, coal and nuclear.

The urgency to tackle climate change is increasingly to the fore in both scientific and faith-based narratives. A few years after the publication of the Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis has convened a special assembly of Bishops from 6-27 October in Rome ([Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon](#)). The Synod aims to determine how the Church can respond to injustices and extractivism in the Pan-Amazon region which fuel climate change. The Church is defining how to contribute to the protection of the Amazon – a key resource of Nature-Based Solutions – and the indigenous communities that implement restoration and conservation strategies. Indigenous communities are principle defenders on the frontlines of the destruction of ecosystems. What’s more, like other communities most vulnerable to climate change impacts, these are the least responsible for the greenhouse gas emissions that put us in this position of human and ecological collapse.

A recent [study](#) has estimated 75% of the effort required to fulfill the Paris Agreement must come from government action and 25% from individual initiatives. Individual citizens and communities have a

¹ Bio-Energy with Carbon Capture and Storage.

critical role to play, but their efforts will be largely ineffective without a systemic change supported by transformational policies.

European and all other governments must rapidly increase ambition and review their NDCs in order to limit global temperature increases to 1.5°C. This must be reflective of their historical responsibilities and in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The new EU 2030 climate target proposed by the Commission President-elect Ursula von der Leyen of reducing emissions by 55% is not sufficient. Emissions will need to be reduced to at least 65% to stay on the 1.5°C pathway.

It's not enough to organise and participate in a summit, make some calls and recognise the emergency while doing little to address it. Real commitment is demonstrated by policy targets, finance, and implementation measured in reduced emissions. Real integrity is demonstrated by the coherence of implementation policies with social justice, which is a basic requirement in order to achieve the Agenda 2030. Bringing to scale the models and solutions proposed by civil society in policy at the national level would challenge the status quo of business as usual, but this is what has to be done. The scientific warnings will not cease. The moral duty to act is unprecedented.

List of Signatories:

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