

Catholic Actors' Statement for Santa Marta: A Moral Moment to Deliver Action for Our Common Home

April 2026

The first Global Stocktake confirmed the scientific call to shift from pledges to implementation, while exposing the growing gap between commitments and actions delivered. Reducing dependence on volatile global fossil-fuel markets ([IRENA, 2024](#)) and the global oil price fluctuations affecting many regions further reinforces the urgency and relevance of decisive action at the Santa Marta Conference and beyond. Recently, the fossil fuel age is failing while renewable energy has become the cheapest, fastest-growing power source globally ([UN, 2025](#)). As global temperatures rise beyond 1.5°C and climate impacts intensify, we face not only an environmental crisis but a profound moral test. We have the knowledge, scientific, technical and financial means to fight climate change ([IPCC, 2023](#), UNFCCC [Decision 1/CMA.5](#)); we just lack the collective political courage to use them to care for the common good and wellbeing of people and the planet. At a time when international cooperation is strained, the care for our common home calls us back to what unites us. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, reminded the world that creation is a shared gift, entrusted to our stewardship and responsibility. Pope Leo XIV has renewed the call to live an integral ecology that leaves no room for indifference or resignation:

[Climate Change] endanger[s] the lives of everyone on this planet and therefore require[s] international cooperation and a cohesive and forward-looking multilateralism which puts the sacredness of life, the God-given dignity of every human being and the common good at its center ([Pontifical Message on COP30 2025](#)).

It is from this moral grounding that we faith actors engage in the Santa Marta and COP process to accelerate the phase-out of fossil fuels and strengthen global cooperation. Our joint statement builds on the [Common Home manifesto](#), [Catholic Theological Reflection](#) on the Proposal for a Fossil Fuel Treaty Initiative, and the current statement unites us to shape the policy direction in the spirit of ambition, moral credibility and collective action on a shared crisis.

The Roadmaps and the Principles That Must Guide Them

We welcome the COP30 presidential roadmaps¹ on (1) transitioning away from fossil fuels, (2) halting deforestation, and (3) mobilizing climate finance at scale. These three efforts must be understood as mutually reinforcing. The roadmaps operationalize the first GST outcomes into action, ensuring real-world transformation rather than a purely political statement. Output from the roadmaps must provide clear guidance on how all actors can and must set sail towards a pathway aligned with the Paris Agreement goals, equity and social justice.

Also noted by the COP28 agreement to triple renewable energy capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030, the urgency of addressing climate change has driven a global commitment to transition to renewable energy systems. To achieve the goals set in the Paris Agreement, governments must achieve the objectives of urgently reducing GHG emissions from burning fossil fuels, increasing climate resilience,

¹ COP30 Presidency Roadmaps decisions adopted by consensus in the First Global Stocktake of the Paris Agreement (GST1), approved at COP28 in Dubai in 2023 focus on transitioning away from fossil fuels (para 28.d) and halting deforestation by 2030 (paras 33-34).

addressing loss and damage, transforming food systems to agroecology, reducing reliance on energy imports and exports, and ensuring access to clean, affordable, and dependable energy for all. A just fossil fuel transition requires finance that enables sustainable development and lowers the cost of capital. Otherwise, the transition risks reinforcing inequality rather than correcting it ([UNCTAD, 2024](#)). Finance must be credible by aligning with the real economy shift required to revert back to 1.5°C as quickly as possible. Forest protection depends on addressing the economic drivers of deforestation and ensuring the rights and support of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups. The extraction and processing of resources and minerals needed for the production of renewable energy must be managed in a way that does not repeat the historic social, economic, and environmental harms and injustices of the fossil fuel era. From aspiration to credibility, the roadmaps should follow these essential principles:

- **People-centred and inclusive**

Roadmaps must be designed and implemented through inclusive transparent engagement that meaningfully involves workers, communities, indigenous peoples and civil society. Target-setting should be rooted in the latest available science, while protecting people's rights, securing livelihoods, ensuring energy access, and strengthening social cohesion.

- **Equitable responsibility**

Roadmaps must reflect local priorities and acknowledge historic responsibility, including loss and damage. The transition must be rooted in community defined development priorities. With wealthier nations leading in ambition and providing predictable, accessible finance that avoids further indebting the Global South and enabling every country to contribute their highest possible ambition towards the common goal of reducing negative impacts on creation via fossil fuels or deforestation. A priority should be enabling universal access to renewable energy, especially for those still lacking access to energy, in support of achieving SDG7.

- **Deep systemic and transformative change across key global systems and sectors**

Failing to align climate action with the 1.5°C temperature limit risks irreversible impacts on ecosystems, livelihoods, and sustainable development goals. Economy-wide and sectoral transformations including the energy system, where a rapid shift away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy and greater energy efficiency is required, as well as the agriculture, food, and land-use systems, which must transition toward sustainable production, reduced emissions, and ecosystem protection and restoration.

- **Alignment of financial flows and economic systems with climate goals**

Global finance must shift away from fossil fuels toward renewable energy, climate-resilient infrastructure, and sustainable development pathways, but this cannot create more debt for developing countries. It requires significantly increased public funding from Global North governments, whose historical responsibility makes this an obligation, according to the fundamental equity principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC). Crucially, this support must avoid further indebting the Global South, enabling fair, equitable and low-carbon and climate-resilient development pathways.

- **Transparency and Accountability**

Roadmaps must be practical, and UNFCCC aligned. They should function as on-going processes rather than one-off reports, offering regular opportunities - such as follow-up conferences to Santa Marta and links to regional climate initiatives to address issues like people-centred renewable expansion, phasing out fossil subsidies, avoiding fossil fuel lock-in and strengthening the role of multilateral development banks by a democratic reform in an equitable and just transition. They must be explicitly connected to the multilateral process so that lessons can inform future COP decisions and national climate plans.

- **Multi-Level Policy Approach**

The roadmap process must go beyond the international level and actively foster ownership at national and local scales. While global roadmaps provide overarching visions, shared goals, and normative orientations, they remain insufficient if they are not translated into context-specific strategies and practices. Effective ownership therefore needs to be shared, inclusive, and anchored across governance levels. To achieve this, global roadmaps should be systematically complemented by national and local roadmap processes that reflect diverse institutional settings, socio-economic conditions, and political priorities.

Key Policy Recommendations for Transformative NDC Implementation

- **Recognize Subsidiarity, Inclusive Participation, and Decision-Making as rights, not privileges:** The right to access to information, participation in decision-making, and seeking redress must be fully protected, particularly for faith groups, indigenous Peoples, smallholder farmers, women, youth, people with disabilities, and other historically marginalized groups. Active and meaningful CSO engagement is not just beneficial; it is also a legal and moral need.
- **Institutionalize inclusive CSO participation:** Make sure that national NDC governance structures/frameworks include formal consultation mechanisms for truly meaningful and effective CSO engagement throughout the NDC ambition cycle (e.g., design, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and revision), and that their positions are traceable and reflected in UNFCCC submissions or negotiators' official positions beyond symbolic representation.
- **Support decentralised renewable energy:** Support the deployment of decentralised renewable energy, which is less resource-intensive than large projects, flexible, resilient, can be owned by local communities and provides an opportunity to close the energy access gap. Investment in decentralised and community-owned renewable energy systems can also reduce reliance on large-scale, resource-intensive projects.
- **Minimise the need for critical minerals:** Promote sufficiency, circular economy and incentivising the responsible sourcing of critical minerals to reduce demand for primary extraction and minimise waste and implementing robust demand-side management strategies to reduce overall energy consumption.
- **Integrate human rights into just transition frameworks:** Ensure that national and international just transition strategies explicitly prioritise human rights, equity, and social justice, moving beyond a purely technological or economic focus.
- **Protect environmental defenders and civic space:** Governments must create a safe and conducive climate for civil society actors and environmental defenders. Rising limits on civic space, as well as the criminalization of activists, jeopardize the effectiveness and legitimacy of participatory NDC procedures.
- **Capacity and coordination support:** Provide enough and targeted financial and technical resources to both governments and civil society organizations to allow effective, informed, and long-term dialogue and action.
- **Accountability and feedback frameworks:** Enhance transparency about how diverse stakeholders' inputs, particularly from civil society, faith, and Indigenous communities as well as other marginalized groups, are included in NDC implementation, and establish mechanisms to resolve grievances while fostering trust.

The Santa Marta Conference as a Bridge Builder

The Santa Marta Conference can serve as a constructive bridge between aspiration and implementation. By convening a coalition of willing partners, it can demonstrate that multilateral cooperation can advance even when consensus proves difficult. Its purpose should be to shape the architecture of the fossil fuel transition roadmap: community-centered, rooted in just transition principles, based on shared ownership and strongly linked to finance and local development. Conference outcomes should feed transparently into the Presidential Roadmap process, strengthening trust, broadening participation, and building momentum toward COP31 for tangible measurable outcomes.

Expectations within the UNFCCC Process

The presidential roadmaps should operationalize the First Global Stocktake's direction: to transition away from fossil fuels, halt and reverse deforestation, and align financial flows with low-emission, climate-resilient development. We encourage Parties to recognize and integrate these roadmaps within the UNFCCC framework at SB64 and COP31, ensuring they inform and facilitate the implementation of nationally determined contributions and upcoming second Global Stocktake. Clear governance, timelines, and review mechanisms will strengthen credibility and uphold multilateral integrity.

Responsibilities of National Governments

We call on governments to demonstrate leadership through active participation in roadmap processes such as the Santa Marta conference, alignment of national plans with the 1.5°C goal, and the development of just transition strategies rooted in community priorities. Global North countries - bearing greater historical responsibility - must, in addition to their own transition, expand fair climate finance, addressing crippling debt burdens that constrain action in the Global South, accelerate emissions reductions and support technology transfer. Countries in the Global South, while facing structural constraints not of their making, are called to pursue just transition pathways that advance equitable development and reflect the voices of workers, communities, indigenous communities and traditional communities. Through ethical leadership and genuine bridge-building, governments must transform voluntary commitments into durable progress. We stand ready to work with you towards policies that secure a dignified present and future for all, grounded in a commitment to care for creation.

Key References

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Organisations

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