



CIDSE and Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace press release, 1 July 2015

Conference “People and Planet First: the Imperative to Change Course”

opened today by a press conference

CIDSE, the network of 17 Catholic development agency and the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace have organized a two day conference: “People and Planet First: the Imperative to Change Course”, which will begin tomorrow. This conference will link the publication (18 June 2015), of Pope Francis’ Encyclical *Laudato Si’* with key political decisions that will be taken over the course of the year.

During the second half of 2015 three major UN conferences will take place: the Addis Ababa meeting on Finance for Development, the UN General Assembly meeting to approve the new Sustainable Development Goals in September, and the Paris meeting, COP 21, in December to agree on a Global Climate deal. The outcome of all these meetings will have a decisive impact for the future of humanity- a positive one if people’s interest is put first, as Pope Francis asks.

Today’s press conference panel featured speakers with very different backgrounds, joined together by Pope Francis’ call for global solidarity to fight climate change: H.E. Cardinal Peter Turkson (President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace), Bernd Nilles (CIDSE Secretary General), Naomi Klein (Author. Latest publication: “This Changes Everything”) and Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer (Co-Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). They shared their thoughts and reflections about the encyclical and the impact that this might have on the world’s future.

Cardinal Turkson highlighted the need to **rethink our models of production and consumption** as mentioned in the encyclical: “In *Laudato si’*, Pope Francis asks what kind of world we are leaving for our children (§ 160). It simply cannot be an environment unable to sustain life, nor a place of unending strife among peoples. The aim must be “People and Planet First” – not one or the other, not one at the expense of the other. This will require new models of development, production, commerce and consumption. The biggest challenge to combating climate change and its impacts is not scientific or even technological. No – it is within our minds and hearts. “The same mindset which stands in the way of making radical decisions to reverse the trend of global warming also stands in the way of achieving the goal of eliminating poverty. A more responsible overall politics is needed to deal with both problems: the reduction of pollution and the development of poorer countries and regions.” (*Laudato si’*, § 175).”

Naomi Klein pointed out that **the encyclical places attention on the world’s most vulnerable regions, which** have been often disregarded by international politics: “With *Laudato si’* Pope Francis has become a voice for the sacrifice zones, a megaphone for the regions and nations that are being allowed to drown and burn because their GDPs are deemed too insignificant. This knowing disregard



for life and safety is a moral crisis for all of humanity and with the publication of the Encyclical; it will become increasingly difficult to ignore this reality.” She also highlighted the **call for divestment** that was launched through the Encyclical: “All around the world, climate justice activists are well aware of the immorality of a business model that requires burning more carbon than our atmosphere can safely absorb, which is why they are demanding that their universities, governments and churches divest from fossil fuels. The publication of the Encyclical is a powerful affirmation of this argument, and it is already greatly emboldening the divestment movement ahead of COP 21 in Paris.”

The call of the encyclical to **use the commons by following the principle of justice** was reiterated by Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer: "The encyclical refers to the atmosphere as a common property of humanity, a common good of all and for all. The common destination of goods was, for the first time in the history of Catholic social teaching, applied to the global environment such as the oceans and the atmosphere. The use of these commons has to be based on justice, in particular on the preferential option for the poor."

Bernd Nilles referred to the ongoing work carried out by civil society organizations such as CIDSE towards [climate justice](#), also praised throughout the encyclical in several points. CIDSE echoed the Pope’s hope for a fair and binding global agreement on climate change at COP 21 that puts the needs of the world’s poorest at its core. The press conference also presented an opportunity for CIDSE to launch its three year campaign: “Change for the Planet- Care for the People”, which reflects many of the encyclical messages. The campaign links Catholic development work for social justice with the promotion of sustainable living. “CIDSE and its members call for policy changes and sustainable lifestyle choices. We believe that collective and individual changes are crucial to respond to the urgency we face through climate change, environmental degradation and the consequence they have on people’s lives.” said Bernd Nilles.

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