

Press Release:

EU Environment Ministers pressed to meet Papal challenge on climate change

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Catholic Church seeking bold EU leadership on Climate Change ahead of COP21

Catholic development agencies today called for EU leaders to rise to the challenge set by Pope Francis to prevent dangerous climate change, as the Pontiff prepares to host an unprecedented audience with EU Environment Ministers and Commissioners.

The private meeting on the 16th of September will see Pope Francis joined in Rome by Commissioners Cañete, Sefcovic and Environment Ministers from around Europe to discuss the climate talks to be held in Paris at the end of the year. It is hoped that this meeting may help bring resolution on the key outstanding issues before the EU Environment Ministerial Council on the 18th of September in Brussels.

The Papal meeting will be followed by further high level talks between the Catholic Church and governments. First at the Green Growth EU Ministerial Summit which will be addressed by the Chancellor of the Vatican's Academy of Sciences, Bishop Sánchez Sorondo and then at the United Nations Headquarters on 26th of September, a day after the Pope's speech to the UN and the eve of an informal climate meeting of heads of state and ministers hosted by the French COP21 presidency, organized by the Vatican, CIDSE and Caritas Internationalis.

The current EU 40% reduction target by 2030 falls far from representing the EU's fair share of the global effort for keeping warming below 2°C, let alone 1.5°C, which is crucial to protect the poorest and most vulnerable groups and regions from dangerous climate change and would signal embarking on changing course towards sustainable and just pathways of life and development.

Bernd Nilles, Secretary General of CIDSE, international alliance of Catholic development agencies urges the Ministers take the bold decisions:

“Pope Francis is appealing to policy makers directly to care for creation and ensure the poor and excluded are protected from the worst impacts of a changing climate. EU Environment Ministers need to muster the courage and leadership to look beyond short-term electoral cycles and take lasting decisions for the common good. The EU needs to push for a long term decarbonisation goal with clear milestones, deliver on the much needed climate finance commitments, and ensure human rights are enshrined in the UN climate agreement.”

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Contacts: For interview enquires with His Excellency Bishop Sánchez Sorondo on 17th September, please contact Rob Elsworth from CIDSE member Cafod: relsworth@cafod.org.uk.

1. A number of passages from Laudato Si': *On care for our common home* outline Pope Francis' challenge to political leaders to tackle climate change and prioritise the common good, in particular:

True statecraft is manifest when, in difficult times, we uphold high principles and think of the long-term common good.

Laudato Si' 178, Pope Francis

Unfortunately recent World Summits on the environment have not lived up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment.

Laudato Si' 166, Pope Francis

Reducing greenhouse gases requires honesty, courage and responsibility, above all on the part of those countries which are more powerful and pollute the most.

Laudato Si' 169, Pope Francis

Yet to build together a sustainable common home, our dialogues, decisions and actions need a comprehensive approach to 'the complex environmental issue.

Laudato Si' 135, Pope Francis

Our plea is that nation leaders can delve deep into 'a true ecological approach', which 'always becomes a social approach', integrating 'questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'

Laudato Si' 49, Pope Francis

The full version of Laudato Si': *On care for our common home* can be found here:

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

2. On the 2-3rd of July CIDSE together with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace held a conference "People and Planet First: the Imperative to Change course". The occasion for this conference was the felt need to link the momentum of the publication of Pope Francis' Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' with the key political decisions that are being taken in the course of the year.

<http://www.cidse.org/articles/climate-justice/the-cidse-conference-people-and-planet-first-the-imperative-to-change-course-called-for-urgent-climate-action-and-greater-transformation-in-economies-and-lifestyles.html>