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CIDSE is an international alliance of Catholic development agencies working together for global justice

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CIDSE input to PCJP-PAS conference on 28/9/2016

"Laudato si'" and the Path to COP22 in Marrakech

Solidarity facing the impacts of climate change

Bernd Nilles, CIDSE Secretary General

CIDSE – www.cidse.org

Dear Eminencies, dear Excellencies, dear ladies and gentlemen,

Catholic Development and Social justice agencies working in CIDSE together since 50 Years

Created towards the end of Vatican II

We develop our recommendations and positions by drawing greatly from Catholic Social Teaching, from evidence on the ground – information and views we receive from our more than 10.000 partner organisations in more than 120 countries -, from research and joint work of the 18 CIDSE member organisations.

With this presentation I look at the global threat of human induced climate change through the lens of our experience and analysis, through Laudato Si as a milestone encyclical within CST. How the climate crisis resonates with other global crises. I will look at responses to the global challenges we are facing and how these resonate with integral ecology and a renewed understanding of solidarity.

How we look at the climate crisis

- The Church's role has always been to consider issues such as climate change from the **viewpoint of entire humanity**, to provide a moral compass that motivates people everywhere to do the right thing and think about how their choices are impacting on the poorest and most vulnerable.
- Based on our history and on our mission, we are called from Pope Francis to put **the poorest at the center**, the ones who are not responsible for the terrible consequences of climate change on people's lives and have less resources to react. The perspective of the poor is a central and prominent theme throughout the Encyclical Laudato Si and the work of many Catholic social justice organizations like CIDSE.
- **Climate change is a further affliction on the poor**, as a further manifestation of social inequality. Because of the direct consequences of climate change, the poor and vulnerable cannot live their life in dignity.
- **Climate Change is destroying a great deal of the results solidarity work and development efforts made** in the fight against poverty.
- Climate Change (CC) is not only causing or exacerbating problems. CC is also demonstrating that our today's **economic system is not working for people and planet**. Many indicators – social as environmental confirm this since decades – but we ignored them. We also tried to ignore CC but we cannot: CC is a global threat to human kind, created by human kind. If we want to escape devastating impacts on most of world population we need to act. The related challenge is though, that we cannot overcome the climate crisis with quick and easy solutions.
- We find ourselves, as the Pope says, in a time of "*environmental crisis*". But this crisis is far from an isolated one. In a message that is notable for binding together the ecological and social justice crises, the Encyclical makes clear that **climate change is a symptom of the underlying social injustices and inequalities** afflicting the global economy.

Laudato Si identifies two types of suffering – **suffering of the people and the suffering of creation. To truly understand the crises we are facing Laudato Si calls on us to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth.** Two cries who are actually one cry as we are facing one deep crisis. Given the scale of the problems we are facing its no longer possible to find a specific answer to each problem isolated from the other challenges we are facing. (LS 137-139). This is important to consider when we talk about Integral Ecology as a response to the climate crisis.

- A political and economic sphere driven with vested interests has preserved the wealth and power of the few, in the process degrading and damaging what should be the common goods of humanity. **The climate and the atmosphere are a common good. And we cannot allow a minority of world population to hijack it.** Resources belong to everyone but are managed by the few.
- **Human rights violations and environmental degradation are products of the values of an extractivist** economic and social model and throwaway culture, stemming from the notion that “everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone.”¹ “This vision of “might is right” has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all.”² Disenfranchised and vulnerable people, communities and whole nations have been the loser throughout history and continue to be the greatest losers due to climate change.
- **Consumption:** A great deal of the emissions created and natural resources exploited do not serve well being and securing livelihoods. The emissions accelerating global warming and other natural resource crises are caused by overconsumption, for luxury goods like airtravel for leisure, for products nobody really needs and to be able to undertake cheap mass production catalyzing even more consumption etc. Only between 1990 and 2015 – over 3 decades - Europeans e.g. triples their annual holiday trips and their air travel. And the longer we wait with putting limits to these behaviors, the more and more people copy these lifestyles and transmit them to the next generation as a normal common lifestyle.

How to overcome the climate crisis and its underlying economic and social paradigm?

Intergenerational Solidarity

To overcome today's dominating and harmful paradigm Pope Francis invites us to think about **what kind of a world we want to leave our children and their children.** **Quote:** *“We can no longer speak of sustainable development apart from intergenerational solidarity. Once we start to think about the kind of world we are leaving to future generations, we look at things differently; we realize that the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others. ... we can no longer view reality in a purely utilitarian way, in which efficiency and productivity are entirely geared to our individual benefit. **Intergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.**” – (LS para 159).* Pope Francis recalls with this the true meaning of sust development – a development that recognizes today's and future generations needs.

¹ Laudato Si' #6

² Laudato Si' #82

A solidarity addressing the root causes

We need to put a renewed understanding of solidarity at the heart of our responses to global crises by looking more at the systemic causes of the problems. In the APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *EVANGELII GAUDIUM* (188-190) Pope Francis clarifies that Jesus' command to his disciples: "You yourselves give them something to eat!" (Mk 6:37) needs to be understood today as working to **eliminate the structural causes of poverty**.... The word "solidarity" is a little worn and at times poorly understood, but it refers to something more than a few sporadic acts of generosity". Solidarity must be lived as the decision to restore to the poor what belongs to them. These convictions and habits of solidarity, when they are put into practice, open the way to other structural transformations and make them possible.

People driven change

- We need to put people and the poor at the heart of any future course.
- More and more people see need and are willing to change
- Through our work at CIDSE with many local communities and social movements we know that **people already have solutions and alternatives** that work at the scale we need. From decentralized community-owned renewable energy for mitigation, to agro-ecological methods for adaptation and transforming the food system, ideas and practices already exist from which to build a global transformation. We need to stop viewing people in faraway places that may be poor as helpless. They are capable of defining their own future only if the system lets them.
- Further we can see worldwide increasing mobilization to stop CC, to change course. Also within the church. People stand up.

Break free of vested interests

In the face of increasing social violence and increasingly hostile environments in which human rights defenders, activists - a large number of whom are women - and communities on the front-lines live and work, change is a journey that is often wrought with risk and can even be **life-threatening**. The church acknowledges the increasingly hostile environment for civil society in many countries and needs to make every effort to create a safe environment for activism: by diplomacy but also by giving affected communities as well as human rights and environmentalists a voice. The meeting of the PCJP with affected front line communities one year ago is a positive example.

Pope Francis has been bold enough to indicate that preserving the climate is not of equal interest to all, and will not be achieved for so long as vested financial interests continue to have their way. And crucially, the Pope has not merely asked through the encyclical for politicians to do more, or to go the extra mile. Instead, he has pointed to the deep flaws in the political process surrounding climate change, and has made an **unequivocal call for politics to break free of the vested interests** that end up "trumping the common good and manipulating information"

Sustainable Development

We need to Abandon the dominant techno-centric solutions being put forward to address the challenges of the Sustainable Development agenda: as Pope Francis highlights: “We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality **decisions about the kind of society we want to build.**” Instead of blindly accepting **false “solutions”** often promoted as “Climate Smart”, Carbon Sinks or Natural Capital Markets³, we must foster “a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational programme, a lifestyle and a spirituality”.⁴ We must challenge a techno-centric paradigm, strongly reinforcing the need to limit and direct technocratic responses to serve human beings as part of the Earth.

Investment and policy must **promote a cooperative economy of small producers** using innovative, non-polluting and climate-safe agro-ecological practices that safeguard bio-diversity, rely on technology built on cultural practice and community-held knowledge and wisdom; shorter food distribution cycles which foster greater respect for labour, community and the earth, as well as non-wasteful and conscious consumption.

Agenda 2030

The political world is not ignoring these developments and this more integrated thinking. Also the Agenda 2030/SDGs agreed in 2015 recognise the need of systemic change. Para 14 of the Agenda 2030 Declaration acknowledges that the world is out of balance and integrated and systemic approaches are needed. Such approaches shall address the “intimate relationship between the poor and the fragility of the planet and need to be built on “the conviction that everything in the world is connected...”⁵ Agenda 2030 also asserts the indivisible responsibility to protect human rights and the environment and reaffirms in the spirit of LS “that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home.” (para 59)

Yet despite the **political rhetoric** of an integrated agenda, the reality is very different. Governments fail to break with old approaches. Fail to do so will take us further down the dangerous path of further breakdown of societies and cultures, uncontrollable increases in poverty, inequality and violence, further environmental degradation and climate collapse. Its a warning that has been issued by many religious and cultural traditions as well as science. In a similar vein Pope Francis reminds us that we must realise that creation is harmed where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone.⁶

³ CIDSE, Paris, for the People and the Planet: the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*-what it means for the COP21 negotiations and beyond, October 2015

⁴ *Laudato Si'* #111

⁵ *Laudato Si'* #16

⁶ *Laudato Si'* #6

Paris

Following the Agenda 2030 the Paris Agreement 2015 was meant to put us on a new path. Also the HS gave this summit high attention and one can probably say that Pope Francis had good reasons to publish LS a few months ahead of the two key UN summits.

The **Paris Accord was without doubt an important milestone** but when we talk now not only about CO2 reductions but about the need for a greater change to fight climate change and other crises, a **major flaw of the Paris climate agreement** is that it does not tell us how we get to stop climate change that serves planet and people. Key safeguards on Human Rights, food security, renewable energy transition were all taken out of the text over the last 48h in Paris. Governments could not agree to say what's wrong (like burning coal, oil and gas) and also not what's right to do.

Paris and its decarbonisation goals are important but we need now all societal forces to secure that we fight climate change in a way that we meet the decarbonisation by 2050 as well as to change course in the way we run our economies, and maintain production and consumption.

The COP in Paris, while it may have delivered on some milestones but examining the agreement with the Encyclical lens makes it clear that preserving the common good and caring for the poor and most vulnerable isn't safeguarded. **Integral ecology is a concept the Pope uses in which the planet is our home and we are one family that needs to live in a culture of global solidarity and protect creation.** The climate is seen as a common good, though humans are destined to make use of the earth, the earth's resources are ultimately a "common heritage"^[1]. According to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other international policies states have a duty to protect citizens against human rights violations and the climate crisis is such a violation. Sadly, human rights threatened by the climate crisis get only a preambular mention in the agreement.

Since climate change is a complex issue, the solutions can't be only market based or technological. In the Pope's own words "*We must be grateful for the praiseworthy efforts being made by scientists and engineers dedicated to finding solutions to man-made problems. But a sober look at our world shows that **the degree of human intervention, often in the service of business interests and consumerism, is actually making our earth less rich and beautiful, ever more limited and grey, even as technological advances and consumer goods continue to abound limitlessly***". – para 34 This is also where the Paris Agreement falls short.

A lot of solutions rely on capital markets and technology and not on the paradigm shift needed to not only prevent climate catastrophe but also reduce the growing inequality and poverty not only in the global south but also at home.

Accountability and global Climate action needed post Paris Cop21

[1] Pope John Paul II. "Peace with God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation." January 1, 1990.

- It is indeed a good sign to see that we are very close to a ratification of the Paris agreement and to see at an early stage countries like the US, China on the list . However as the Pope states “*a global consensus is essential for confronting the deeper problems, which cannot be resolved by unilateral actions on the part of individual countries.*” The Paris outcome is a list of voluntary pledges by individual countries to define actions they will take. Even once the agreement enters into force there are not mechanisms in place to ensure that countries will honour their pledges or be held accountable for not meeting their commitments.
- The problem of climate change is actually quite straight forward – but it challenges our whole concept of industrialised development based on fossil fuels and ever increasing consumption. Key thinkers on the issue are increasingly convinced that we need to move beyond simply focusing on long-term emissions targets (although this will need to feature in our commitments) towards clear pathways and specific procedures to decarbonise our entire economies.
- The times we are living in call for extraordinary responses. Climate policies won't change until the politics changes. The politics won't change unless the people want change. This is why Pope Francis' call for dialogue is something we should all be taking up.
- I hope that decision-makers coming together at COP22 in Marrakesh will also heed his call to enter into dialogue with not just each other but the communities that are impacted and affected.
- In Marrakesh we need governments recognizing that the current INDCs are not putting us on a 2C or well below 2C, nor 1,5C path. Governments need to ramp up their ambitions. And they need to implement changes faster. Monitoring the policies put in place show that most governments are not on track to meet even their insufficient INDCs.
- Marrakesh needs to secure that governments do not put their heads in the sand and wait for 5 year review cycles.
- We need governments that make strong commitments and changes pre 2020 before Paris actually comes into force.
- Marrakesh is key for progress on implementing commitments on climate finance, loss and damage, adaptation, agriculture and land use.
- We look forward to a **special report by the IPCC on how to reach the 1,5C goal scheduled for 2018**. I believe that this report will confirm what Pope Francis is calling for: the need for a massive transformation of our economies and societies. This report needs to inform the facilitated dialogue at Cop24 in 2018.
- Marrakesh to recognize the decision of the UN Human rights council: Climate action needs to respect human rights. In two ways: Human Rights require climate action, the actions itself need to respect human rights. Human rights can ensure that the social dimension becomes a fully integral part of climate policies.

As CIDSE we see further as crucial to embark on fair, just and sustainable low carbon pathways. The Pope points out that “*a consensus could lead, for example, to planning a sustainable and diversified agriculture developing renewable and less polluting forms of energy, encouraging a more efficient use of energy, promoting a better management of marine and forest resources, and ensuring universal access to drinking water*”. (...) “*We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels – especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas – needs to be progressively replaced without delay*”- para 70

- **Agriculture:** Prioritisation of Agroecological versus industrial approaches to address the 30% of global GHG emissions related to agriculture. Lets move agriculture from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. And let us stop trying to invent the wheel again with so-called new approaches called climate smart or similar. Let focus on approaches like agroecology where we have evidence and science. Need to end the chemical intense industrial agriculture.
- **Coal:** It's time to move on from fossil fuels. All of the climate related catastrophes that are happening in the world have to do with the fact that a few countries are retooling their infrastructure and going after the dirtiest energy sources in the world. Using more fossil fuels will add hundreds of millions of tons of CO2 to the atmosphere and takes us far beyond the 2 degree threshold. It's time to end the fossil fuel infrastructure and subsidies. We need to divest from fossil fuels. We need **100% Renewable Energy for all that is sustainable, affordable and community-driven.**

To summarize: The climate crisis is urgent and evident. To overcome it we need a paradigm shift, a greater transformation. Today's responses still fuel the wrong system and fall short on the urgency. People offer solutions that work but vested interests hold us back. We are still not on track. We need to put policies that underpin the brighter future and well being of all human kind and we need them now, not post 2020. Laudato Si is offering us a framework and a theory of change that can help us on this path.

Thank you!