

CIDSE Press release, 4 April 2022

Catholic agencies call for urgent climate mitigation action echoing scientific research

CIDSE reaction to the release of the latest Working Group III report by the International Panel of Experts on Climate Change (IPCC)

The IPCC released today its report on the mitigation of climate change and its message is crystal clear: we need **climate action now** in the form of deep and urgent **emissions reductions**, and well before 2030, to stay below 1.5°C. According to the report, urgent action is needed over the next eight years if we are going to meet the Paris Agreement goals. As Catholic Development agencies, we are inspired by Pope Francis to call for urgent action on the climate emergency.

“The Lenten season is a time for restoring right relationships with each other and with all of Creation, making it the perfect time to welcome this report. Limiting temperature rise to 1.5 °C requires reducing our energy use, investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy. International climate finance for mitigation and adaptation in low- and middle-income countries is also essential for a global just transition. Governments must be careful to ensure that mitigation and adaptation solutions do not harm communities and ecosystems in this pursuit”. - Susan Gunn, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA

The previous IPCC report ([see CIDSE press release](#), February 2022) highlighted that as global warming will reach 1.5°C (2.7°F) in the next two decades, multiple climate hazards will be unavoidable. Even temporarily exceeding this level of warming will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible. Societies will be exposed to severe risks, including infrastructure and coastal settlements exposing millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, especially in Africa, Asia, Central and South America, on Small Islands and in the Arctic. While climate change is a global challenge, it requires local solutions (IPCC [AR6 WGIII press statement, 2022](#)).

The current IPCC report stresses that actions to reduce the increase of carbon emissions and related greenhouse gases as well as the severity and impacts of climate change must be taken immediately and with **greater ambition** by all countries, especially in those that are the most industrialised. This report should be a clarion call for all rich nations to urgently **decarbonise their economies** to protect the planet from the unthinkable devastation that will be caused by currently projected levels of warming. To avoid overshooting the 1.5 °C limit, and to avoid the irreparable damages that will result from that, emissions must decline to approximately zero as countries implement their National Determined Contributions (NDC) to remain consistent with the Paris temperature goal of 1.5°C, and thus, closing the ambition gap. The focus needs to be on **transformative solutions** such as just, renewable and decentralised energy systems and agroecology. Any “ambition” relying on climate false solutions such as Negative Emission Technologies (NETs), bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) and geoengineering would lock us in in dangerous pathways and wouldn’t help towards reaching the 1.5°C temperature goal effectively.

“The IPCC report shows unequivocally that people throughout the world, particularly the poorest who live in the most fragile places, will suffer catastrophic losses & damages if the world warms by more than 1.5 °C. It is vital that all countries of the world urgently cut their emissions to stop this. Richer countries must urgently kick their addiction to fossil fuels and mass consumption. This is the only way to stop the world overheating and leaving a planet that is habitable for future generations. If we don’t, our children and grandchildren will never forgive us.” - Alistair Dutton, Director of SCIAF, Scotland

The new report also reinforces how social justice, climate justice and inclusive public participation is essential to achieving the necessary transformations in energy and economic systems sufficiently quick and at the national and

global scale. For CIDSE, **social and climate justice** are indeed two faces of the same coin and there cannot be any real justice without people's engagement and participation from the bottom-up as well as respect for human rights. In times of crisis, we shouldn't forget the human factors and at the same time, when humanitarian crises take place climate change can't be forgotten as it is an ongoing reality. Instead, the compounding crises should be seen as signals to spur us on to transform the global energy systems to renewables for all.

"The world needs change. The publication of the IPCC Working Group III report confirms the link between climate, biodiversity and social factors. The effects of climate change are occurring sooner than expected. The war in Ukraine and solidarity with people affected by Russian aggression must not result in climate inaction or roll back. Preventing every additional tenth of global warming is imperative." - **Pirmin Spiegel, Director of MISEREOR, Germany**

CIDSE also welcomes how the IPCC clearly traces connections between climate change and **trade policies** in a globalised economy, where transnational corporations' profit often comes before the common good and the environment.

The IPCC report names [Investor-State Dispute Settlements](#) (ISDSs), which allow investors to sue states for compensation when climate policies, as well as other policies around labor or tax, among others, impair their profits. By discouraging governments to introduce policies tackling climate change, this legal tool can hinder ambitious climate action with states fearing to be sued by **powerful corporations**. ISDSs are contained in over 2,300 international agreements.

"Corporate power is hindering climate justice. This means that to really tackle climate change, we need to address our economic system. As Pope Francis has said, we cannot live within an economy based on insatiable and irresponsible growth. We are motivated to challenge the system based on the direct experiences of people at the forefront of climate change, who need mitigation urgently". - **Josianne Gauthier, CIDSE Secretary General**

CIDSE's policy asks, in accordance with the evidence of the report:

1. In order to close the emissions and equity gap, urgent, ambitious and transformative mitigation action is paramount and should not be separated from the adaptation and loss and damage agendas as they remain equally important and interdependent.
2. The acceleration to a just energy transition and fossil phase-out without Geo-engineering & carbon capture because Negative Emissions Technologies (NET), Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) or Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS) are proposing a retrospective approach to emission reduction. That is, it is never a solution to rely on risky technologies that have not yet developed or proven effective, nor is it a solution to continue accepting more risks already posed to the environment and people because of following mitigation models that rely on such technologies.
3. Urgent and just transition to safer, affordable and accessible proven technologies such as Renewable Energy Systems and Agroecology should bring all fossil fuel subsidies (and infrastructure) to an end.
4. Make equity and human rights as key principles for ensuring the integrity of the Paris Agreement and UN SDG implementation, thus leaving no one behind.

Notes to the editors:

What is climate change mitigation? Climate Change Mitigation refers to efforts to reduce or prevent emission of greenhouse gases. For a more comprehensive definition, refer to the [UNFCCC website](#).

What does ambition gap mean? The ambition gap commonly describes the gap that exists between the level of ambition of states in terms of their willingness to take ambitious climate action and the degree of action that is in fact necessary to effectively address climate change.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. For a more comprehensive definition, refer to the [UNFCCC website](#).

About the IPCC and the current assessment cycle: [The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\)](#) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. The IPCC provides regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation. It is currently on its [Sixth Assessment cycle](#), and they will produce the Assessment reports of its three Working Groups. As part of this cycle, the IPCC just released the WGIII report on "Mitigation of Climate Change".

Recent publications by CIDSE on Climate Change:

[Climate Justice in the context of Covid-19 \(2021\)](#)

[The Climate Urgency: Setting Sail for a New Paradigm \(2018\)](#)

About ISDS: Watch the video "[Stop ISDS and support the Binding Treaty](#)" and read the article "[Campaigners dressed as wolves invade Davos in protest against ISDS 'corporate courts'](#)"