



British Embassy
Holy See



Ambasciata d'Italia
Santa Sede

Together with:



Holy See

Provisional programme

Faith and Science: Towards COP26

Thursday 29 April 2021 | WP1888V4

To be held virtually

Context

The global temperature has already increased by one degree Celsius above the twentieth century average. With present National Determined Contributions (NDCs), the temperature will rise by 3 degrees, which will be catastrophic for the entire planet - humans, animals, and plants - especially the marginalised and poorest communities. COP26 aims to galvanise action to limit the rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The coronavirus crisis demonstrates that universal solidarity is needed in the face of a serious threat to human life. The present ecological crisis requires a similarly collective approach. When the planet is sick, we all fall ill because we are an integral part of the whole. Health and climate are common goods: pandemics and environmental disasters do not respect national boundaries. Common action is needed for our common wellbeing. Humanity still has the ability to work together to 'build back better' by taking the path to net zero and by supporting a green recovery.

Ecological damage threatens all, but in particular the poor and marginalised. Therefore, both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor are closely related. We must urgently scale up action to respond to the threat of climate change, particularly for the most vulnerable countries and communities at the frontline of climate impacts. Climate change also threatens the young and their future due to the damage done by previous generations. We all have a moral obligation to cooperate in the healing of the planet and to safeguard "our common home" for the future. Young people vociferously demand this change.

Religions impart and instil moral values in their adherents. All religions and spiritual traditions embrace respect and care for creation. In this regard, faith leaders played a key role in building momentum for COP21 in 2015, for example with Pope Francis's encyclical letter *Laudato Si*, the Interfaith Climate Change Statement to World Leaders, declarations by different religious groups on climate change, and contributions to the UN 2030 Agenda.

Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar set out the case for all believers, indeed for all people of good will, to address global challenges including environmental problems together in their *Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*, signed in Abu Dhabi in February 2019. Collective action by people of faith could have enormous impact in resolving the climate crisis.



Wilton Park

Faith Event

The British Embassy and the Italian Embassy, together with the Holy See, will organise an event in Rome for leaders of religions and spiritual traditions and some leading scientists to set out their vision for tackling climate change.

The aims of the meeting will be to:

- Raise the ambition of national governments regarding their National Determined Contributions to reach the Paris Agreement goals;
- Show how the faiths are leading the way by greening their own operations at central and local level, and possibly make any new commitments;
- Encourage individuals to take specific actions to slow global temperature rises.

Based on religious values, the approach will be positive and pragmatic, emphasising our common responsibility for stewardship of the earth, and determination to change in order to care for the earth for future generations.

In preparation for this event, the British Embassy and the Italian Embassy, together with the Holy See, will convene a series of virtual meetings to prepare the event, beginning on Thursday 4 February and continuing on 25 February, 25 March, 29 April, 20 May, 10 June and 8 July. The aims of these preparatory virtual meetings will be to discuss:

- Faith's theology on care for the environment.
- The action you have taken so far in caring the environment and tackling climate change.
- Thoughts on the way forward including any new commitments you plan to make.

The meetings will also hear from prominent scientists on the challenge of climate change.

After the first six meetings, the faith leaders will be asked to prepare an appeal to the political leaders attending COP26 on 1-12 November in Glasgow, United Kingdom. A further virtual meeting will be convened on 8 July to agree the draft.

In addition, participants are invited, if they would like to, to submit a short document outlining the three aforementioned issues. This will be shared on the meeting portal.

Partners: The British and Italian Embassies to the Holy See, together with the Holy See

(Speakers invited and themes proposed)

Thursday 29 April (times in CET)

1215-1230

Orientation Session

Technical check ahead of the official start of the meeting.

1230-1240

Welcome and introduction

Alison Hilliard

Programme Director, Wilton Park

Sally Axworthy

British Ambassador to the Holy See

Francesca Di Giovanni

Undersecretary for Multilateral Sector, Holy See

Pietro Sebastiani

Italian Ambassador to the Holy See

1240-1250

1. The Challenge: Why faith leaders need to play a role in tackling climate change

The challenge from leading climate scientists

Dr Ismahane Elouafi

Chief Scientist, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

1250-1330

2. The Faith Leaders' interventions

Faith's theology on care for the environment; action taken so far in caring for the environment and tackling climate change; and thoughts on the way forward including any new commitments planned.

Prof. Dr. Abbas Shouman

Al-Azhar Institution and representative of His Eminence Dr. Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, Grand Imam of Al Azhar

Mrs. Bibi Kiranjot Kaur

Senior Member, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar

Rev. Henrik Grape

Senior Advisor on Care for Creation, Sustainability, and Climate Justice, World Council of Churches

Discussion

1330-1340

BREAK

1340-1350

3. The Challenge: Why faith leaders need to play a role in tackling climate change

The challenge from leading climate scientists.

Prof. Michelle Mycoo

Expert on small islands and adviser to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

1350-1425

4. The Faith Leaders' Interventions

Faith's theology on care for the environment; action taken so far in caring for the environment and tackling climate change; and thoughts on the way forward including any new commitments planned.

Archbishop Prof. Thomas Schirrmacher

Secretary General, World Evangelical Alliance

Venerable Dr Galkande Dhammananda

Executive Director, Walpola Rahula Institute for Buddhist Studies

John Lochowiak

Chairperson, National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council

Discussion

1425-1430

5. Concluding remarks

Sally Axworthy

British Ambassador to the Holy See