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FAITH AND SCIENCE: AN APPEAL FOR COP26

Faith leaders representing the world's major religions joined scientists at the Vatican today to call on the international community to raise their ambition and step up their climate action ahead of COP26. Almost 40 faith leaders signed a joint Appeal, which was presented by Pope Francis to COP26 President-Designate, the Rt Hon Alok Sharma, and the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Luigi Di Maio.

Signatories include high-profile representatives from across the Christian denominations, both Sunni and Shi'a Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism – representing a broad range of faith leaders.

The Appeal:

- Calls for the world to achieve net-zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels;
- Presses wealthier nations and those with the greatest responsibility to take the lead, stepping up their climate action at home and financially supporting vulnerable countries to adapt to and address climate change.
- Urges governments to raise their ambition and their international cooperation to transition to clean energy and to sustainable land use practices, environmentally friendly food systems and responsible financing.
- Commits the faith leaders themselves to greater climate action. Notably, doing more to educate and influence members of their traditions and actively participating in the public debate on environmental issues. The faith leaders will also support action to green their community assets, such as properties and investments.

With the window narrowing to restore the planet, the faith leaders and scientists implored the international

community to take speedy action, saying: 'Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden: we must not leave a desert to our children.'

The Appeal follows months of dialogue, in which the faith leaders and scientists built a dialogue in a spirit of humility, responsibility and mutual respect to agree a common moral duty to tackle climate change.

The diversity of participants makes this a highly significant moment with the potential to have a powerful impact not only at COP26 but also on the estimated 84% of the world's population who identify with a faith.[1]

COP26 President-Designate, Alok Sharma, said: 'I am honoured to receive this historic joint appeal as we press for progress towards limiting global temperature rises to 1.5°C at COP26 in just a few weeks' time. We must all hear the voices of those most affected by climate change and I hope people of faith will continue to be a key part of this dialogue as we work together to drive forward climate action.'

Note for editors

·The Vatican event and Appeal were preceded by a series of virtual dialogues between the faith leaders and scientists throughout 2021. The event and dialogues were organised by the British and Italian embassies to the Holy See, as well as the Holy See itself. Logistical support and facilitation for the organisation of the event and its preparatory meetings have been provided by Wilton Park, an executive agency of the UK Government.

·The Faith and Science: Towards COP26 meeting takes place after the preparatory COP26 events in Milan: the world Conference dedicated to young people 'Youth4Climate: Driving Ambition' and the Pre-COP26 (28 September to 2 October 2021).

·The UK, in partnership with Italy, will host the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow in 31 October-12 November 2021. The summit will bring parties together to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

[1] The Global Religious Center, Pew Research Centre (2012)
