



Care for Our Common Home

The Holy See/Vatican City State accedes to the UNFCCC and to the Paris Agreement



The Holy See, in the name and on behalf of the Vatican City State, recently deposited before the UN Secretary-General, the instruments of accession to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), adopted in 1992, and the Paris Agreement under the UNFCCC, adopted in 2015.

Both documents will enter into force for the Holy See, in the name and on behalf of the Vatican City State, on 4 October 2022, the Solemnity of St. Francis. This date also marks the first anniversary of the event on “Faith and Science: Towards COP26”, which was held in the Vatican on October 4, 2021, and was attended, together with Pope Francis, by numerous religious leaders and scientists. On that occasion, these representatives, from many faiths and spiritual traditions, as well as from many cultures and scientific fields, made their voices heard. Different voices, with different sensitivities. What could be clearly perceived was a strong convergence of all those present in committing themselves to the urgent need to change course, by moving with decision and conviction from the “throwaway culture”, prevalent in our society, to a “culture of care” for our common home, for those already living here and for those who will live here in the future.

In order to celebrate this important moment, the Secretariat of State, in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, has deemed it appropriate to organize a moment of reflection, in hybrid format, on the “Care for Our Common Home”. This celebration will also take place in the lead up to the next session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC, known as COP-27, which will take place in Sharm el-Sheikh from the 6th to the 18th November 2022.

Major challenges, such as climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic, are not only relevant for the environment and our health, but also for their ethical, social, economic and political impacts. They are closely related to issues of ethics, equity and social justice. This forces us to reflect on the meaning of our consumption and production patterns, as well as on the way we educate and build awareness in order to make these patterns more consistent with human dignity.

Above all, by affecting the lives of the poorest and most fragile, these challenges appeal to our responsibility to promote, with collective commitment and in solidarity, a culture of care that places human dignity and the common good at its center. This is a commitment that requires deep and solid collaboration that involves everyone, from the individual to the entire international community and it should be carried out according to the principle of subsidiarity, anchored in the principle of solidarity.

Consistent with this appeal, in 2020 Pope Francis announced that the Holy See would join the goal of net-zero emissions, responding at two levels[1]:

1) The Vatican City State is committed to reducing net emissions to zero before 2050, intensifying its efforts towards better environmental management that have already been in place for a number of years. The goal is to continue to find ways to use natural resources even more effectively, including through sustainable water and energy consumption, increased energy efficiency and sustainable mobility, reforestation, and commitment to the circular economy, including in waste management.

2) In addition, the Holy See is dedicated to promoting education in integral ecology. Political, technical and operational measures are not enough, they must be combined with an educational approach that, in particular, addresses young people, and that promotes new lifestyles, while fostering a cultural model of development and sustainability, based on fraternity and cooperation, between the human being and the environment.

«The moment has come for a change of direction. Let us not rob the new generations of their hope in a better future»[2].

In the 21st century, humanity is faced with an epochal transformation, which, understood within the context of the challenge posed by climate change, means: addressing daily behavior and our economic-financial investments from a perspective of integral sustainability, decarbonisation of the economic system and of the daily life, the promotion of a circular economy, support for the most vulnerable Countries to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to respond to the loss and damage derived from this phenomenon.

Pope Francis, in His Message to COP-26, held in Glasgow in November 2021, stressed that «the wounds inflicted on our human family by the Covid-19 pandemic and the phenomenon of climate

change are comparable to those resulting from a global conflict. Today, as in the aftermath of the Second World War, the international community as a whole needs to set as a priority the implementation of collegial, solidary and farsighted actions». Faced with the war in Ukraine and the many conflicts scattered across the globe in 2022, this message takes on even greater significance. «We need both hope and courage», Pope Francis urged on that occasion, «humanity possesses the wherewithal to effect this change, which calls for a genuine conversion, individual as well as communitarian, and a decisive will to set out on this path. It will entail the transition towards a more integral and integrating model of development, based on solidarity and on responsibility».

The purpose of the 4th October event is to relaunch this message of hope and courage in a specific historical moment, like the present one, where the pressures against multilateralism and international dialogue are heightened even while the opportunities offered to humanity for a real “ecological conversion” are actual and present. «The young, who in recent years have strongly urged us to act, will only inherit the planet we choose to leave to them, based on the concrete choices we make today. Now is the moment for decisions that can provide them with reasons for hope and trust in the future»[3].

[1] Cfr. Pope Francis, Video-Message to the High Level Climate Ambition Summit, New York, 12 December 2020.

[1] *Ibidem*.

[3] Pope Francis, Message to the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC - COP-26, 29 October 2021.