



## Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Summit of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences “From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience”



*Your Eminence,  
Your Excellency,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I am pleased to welcome you, the members of the Pontifical Academies of Science and the Social Sciences. I greet the President and all the guests, mayors and governors coming from various parts of the world for this Summit on the theme, *From Climate Crisis to Climate Resilience*.

The data on climate change are growing worse with each passing year, and so it is urgent to act to protect people and nature. I commend the two Academies for their leadership in this effort and for their work in producing a universal document on resilience. The poorer peoples, who have very little to do with the pollution of the environment, need to receive much greater support and protection. They are victims.

“The destruction of the environment is an offense against God, a sin that is not only personal but also structural, one that greatly endangers all human beings, especially the most vulnerable in our midst, and threatens to unleash a conflict between generations” (*Address to COP28*, Dubai, 2 December 2023). This is the question: Are we working for a culture of life or for a culture of death?

You have answered that we must heed the cry of the earth, hear the plea of the poor, and be attentive to the aspirations of the young and the dreams of children! We have a grave responsibility to ensure that their future is not denied them. You have declared your resolve to choose a sustainable human development. I very much appreciate this decision, since climate change is “a global social issue and one intimately related to the dignity of human life” (*Laudate Deum*, 3).

At present, we find ourselves faced with systemic challenges that are distinct yet interconnected: climate change, the loss of biodiversity, environmental decay, global disparities, lack of food security and threats to the dignity of the peoples affected by them. Unless these issues are faced urgently and collectively, they represent existential threats for our human family, for other living beings and for all ecosystems. One thing, however, should be clear. The world’s poor suffer more, even though they contribute less to these problems. The wealthier nations, around 1 billion people, produce more than half the heat trapping pollutants. On the contrary, the 3 billion poorer people contribute less than 10%, yet they suffer 75% of the resulting damage. The 46 less developed countries – mostly African - represent only 1% of global CO2 emissions, whereas the nations of the G20 are responsible for 80% of those emissions.

Your research has indicated the tragic fact that women and children bear a disproportionate burden in this regard. Often women do not enjoy the same access to resources as men; furthermore, keeping house and caring for children can restrain them from migrating in the face of disasters. Yet women are not simply victims of climate change; they are also a powerful force for resilience and adaptation. As for children, almost 1 billion of them live in countries that face an extremely high risk of climate-related disasters. Their growth years make them all the more susceptible to the effects, both physical and psychological, of climate change.

The refusal to act quickly to protect the most vulnerable who are exposed to climate change caused by human activity is a serious offence and a grave violation of human rights, as was recently stated by the European Court of Human Rights. An orderly progress is being held back by the greedy pursuit of short-term gains by polluting industries and by the spread of disinformation, which generates confusion and obstructs collective efforts for a change in course.

Brothers and sisters, the road ahead is uphill and not without danger. The data emerging from this Summit have shown that the effects of climate change loom over every aspect of our lives, threatening water, air, food and energy systems. Likewise alarming are the threats to public health and welfare. We are witnessing the dissolution of communities and the forced dispersion of families. Atmospheric pollution takes millions of lives prematurely each year. Over 3½ billion people live in areas highly susceptible to the devastation caused by climate change, and this drives them to forced migration. In recent years, we have seen how many of our brothers and sisters have lost their lives in desperate journeys, and the forecasts for the future are troubling. Defending the dignity and rights of climate migrants entails defending *the sacredness of each*

*human life* and demanding respect for the divine command to *care for and defend our common home*.

In light of this planetary crisis, I add my voice to your heartfelt appeal.

First, there is a need to adopt a *universal approach* and a *rapid and resolute activity* capable of effecting changes and political decisions. Second, there is a need to *invert the global warming curve* by efforts to decrease by a half the rate of warming within the brief span of a quarter-century. Likewise, there is a need to aim for global de-carbonization and the elimination of dependence on fossil fuels. Third, the great quantities of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere must be eliminated through an environmental management programme that will span several generations. This is a lengthy yet farsighted effort, one we must all undertake together. In this effort, nature will prove to be our faithful ally, by exercising its own regenerative powers.

Let us safeguard our natural resources: the Amazon basin and that of the Congo, the peat bogs and the mangroves, the oceans, the coral reefs, the farmlands and the glacial icecaps, given the contribution they make to the reduction of global carbon emissions. This holistic approach can combat climate change, while also confronting the double crisis of the loss of biodiversity and inequality by cultivating the ecosystems that sustain life.

The climate crisis requires a synergy of cooperation and global solidarity. This effort must be symphonic, carried out harmoniously by everyone together. Thanks to emissions reduction, education in lifestyles, innovative financing and the use of proven nature-based solutions, we will reinforce resilience, and resilience to drought in particular.

Lastly, there is a need to develop a new financial architecture capable of responding to the demands of the global South and of the island states that have been seriously affected by climate catastrophes. The restructuring and reduction of debt, together with the development of a new global financial Charter by 2025, acknowledging a sort of *ecological debt* – we must work on this term: ecological debt – can be of great assistance in mitigating climate changes.

Dear friends, I thank you for your efforts and I encourage you to continue to work together in effecting a transition from the current climate crisis to climate resilience in equality and social justice. There is a need to act with urgency – with urgency! – compassion and determination, since the stakes could not be higher. Go forward and may God bless you. I assure you of my prayers and I ask you, please to pray for me. Thank you!