

# Religious Life for Climate Justice Campaign

## Turning Hope into Action

The year 2024, the warmest on record worldwide, marked a significant milestone in the climate crisis. It was the first calendar year when the average global temperature exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, a threshold that the Paris Climate Agreement aimed to prevent. The early months of 2025 furthered this trend. The urgency of the global warming crisis cannot be overstated. We are witnessing increasingly severe impacts, particularly affecting people with low and middle incomes in both developing and developed countries.

The COP30 presidency is inviting the international community to join in a global “mutirão” (an ancestral practice of coming together to work on a shared task) against climate change in a collaborative effort among peoples for the progress of humanity. COP30 can be the turning point in climate action, guided by the principle of climate justice, away from the current trends that are leading the world towards an abyss.

As members and collaborators of the Catholic Church, Religious Orders and Congregations stand united with all people of goodwill who advocate for a just future for all. Our collective voice carries weight, and we urge the delegates to COP30 and governments to:

1. **Cancel the debts of poor countries**, as unjust and unpayable debts should not compromise resources for climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.
2. **Strengthen the Loss and Damage Fund (FRLD)** by allocating sufficient resources to tackle the severe effects of climate change.
3. **Set clear targets for a fair energy transition that aims to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**, considering historical responsibilities, respecting human rights—especially Indigenous rights, valuing and protecting nature, and prioritizing sustainable livelihoods over profit-driven models.
4. **Set clear goals to develop a global food system based on food sovereignty and agroecological practices**; one that promotes culturally adapted methods for production, transformation, distribution, and food consumption.

The COP process is imperative for making international progress on the climate crisis. Pope Francis stated, "It is a matter of establishing global and effective rules that can permit 'providing for' this global safeguarding." (Laudate Deum no 42), and Pope Leo XIV insists: “Our mission to care for creation, to foster peace and reconciliation, is Jesus’ mission, the mission that the Lord entrusts to us. We hear the cry of the earth, and we hear the cry of the poor, because this plea has reached the heart of God. Our indignation is his indignation; our work is his work”. (Homily, 9 July 2025).

Let us heed these calls and work together to build a world where all may have life and have it to the full. (John 10:10).

# Policy Brief

July 2025

## Introduction

Ten years after the Paris Agreement, with its primary objective of limiting global warming to 1.5°C, we find ourselves in a precarious position regarding climate change, as global warming is predicted to reach 2.7°C by 2100, and a new wave of apathy is emerging in world leadership on climate matters. Following Pope Francis' analysis in his landmark encyclical 'Laudato Si', we face "one complex crisis that is both social and environmental" (n. 139).

We, religious Orders and Congregations in the Catholic Church, are called to advocate for Climate Justice - especially for the most vulnerable communities of the Global South - at the critical 30th Conference of the Parties (COP30) meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) taking place in Belém do Pará, Brazil, in November 2025.

Accordingly, and in response to the ongoing mechanisms within the UNFCCC, we urge the delegates to COP30 and governments to:

- 1. Cancel the debt of poor countries**
- 2. Strengthen the Loss and Damage Fund**
- 3. Set targets for a just energy transition that aims to reduce CO2 emissions**
- 4. Set clear goals to develop a global food system based on food sovereignty and agroecological practices**

This policy brief highlights the main goals and policy issues related to the upcoming calls for COP30. It explains each call, providing context within the UNFCCC proceedings, along with recommended readings. While it may be useful for delegates, this publication is mainly intended to inform a broader audience and will be publicly accessible. The second edition also includes a progress report from the SB62 Climate Meetings in Bonn, a preparatory event for COP30, held from June 16 to 26, 2025.

## What is COP30?

The 30th session of the Conference of the Parties ([COP30](#)) is called to make a significant step in tackling climate change globally. As the main decision-making body of the Convention established by the [UNFCCC](#), the COP convenes countries annually to review and advance international climate legislation and initiatives. These gatherings began in 1995 and have each time built upon the [original framework of the UNFCCC](#).

COP30 will be a crucial moment to see how far the world has come since the [Paris Agreement of 2015](#). This agreement is a legally binding international treaty that establishes a global goal to keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius, ideally [to 1.5 degrees, compared to pre-industrial levels](#). At COP30, discussions will be crucial in strengthening national climate plans and their proposal as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

The fact that [it's being held in Belém](#), right in the heart of the Amazon, adds a huge layer of significance, highlighting the urgent need to protect vital ecosystems and the communities that depend on them.

Many Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) see COP30 as a crucial opportunity to share their insights and advocate for more decisive climate action, ensuring everyone's voice is heard and that governments follow through on their commitments under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement.

### **SB62 Bonn Climate Meetings: Preparatory Process and Outcomes**

[Held in Bonn from 16-26 June 2025](#), SB62 aimed to address unresolved issues in preparation for COP30, but largely underperformed in laying clear groundwork:

- The dissatisfaction of developing countries with the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on climate finance, adopted in November 2024, remains unanswered. Developing countries are demanding a dedicated space for accountability on Article 9.1, while developed countries are pushing back, emphasizing that existing processes are sufficient.
- Critical issues, such as integrating debt considerations into climate finance, remained unresolved, while the [implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund stalled](#) due to disagreements over guidelines and funding scales. Developed countries resisted discussing public finance support, with little progress made on distinguishing between loans and grants, a crucial concern for climate-vulnerable nations.
- Energy transition efforts [achieved a breakthrough](#) when Just Transition priorities ([UAE Work Programme](#)) were officially tabled in the UN climate process, creating new pathways for people-centred climate action. Developing countries advocated for more targeted approaches to the [Technology Implementation Programme](#), highlighting the importance of tailoring solutions to local contexts.
- Significant progress on climate adaptation was also seen with a [hard-fought compromise deal](#) on the Global Goal on Adaptation ([GGA](#)) on the last day of the conference. Negotiators reached common ground on developing indicators to measure progress in adaptation, with the final text including provisions for adaptation finance.
- Meanwhile, the Sharm El-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security ([SJWA](#)) held its first workshops, received its first annual synthesis report, and launched an online portal for sharing best practices in agriculture and food systems. Still, the prevailing financial scarcity meant that securing adequate funding for agroecological transformation remained unaddressed.

SB62 achieved mixed results overall. While some technical progress was made on adaptation indicators, a significant consensus was lacking on crucial financial and implementation mechanisms. This outcome places substantial pressure on COP30 to resolve the deep-seated disagreements that continue to hamper high-level climate discussions.

## FIRST CALL

### Cancel the debt of the poor countries

#### *What are we asking and why?*

The Jubilee year offers a significant opportunity to advocate for debt relief through the Caritas-led ['Turn Debt into Hope' campaign](#), which follows Pope Francis' appeal for debt relief and calls for establishing a new UN financial framework. We wholeheartedly join this appeal and campaign as a fundamental challenge for the universal community of nations. We support proposals for cooperation between creditors and debtors to implement systemic financial reforms, debt cancellation, and debt restructuring.

#### *Current situation*

The current debt crisis has historical roots and is global in scope. Debt distress threatens human development and impedes progress because debt costs outpace essential spending. The debt of low and middle-income countries is unsustainable, illegitimate, and unfair.

There is an inequality of possibilities and resources among countries in dealing with disasters that are increasing due to climate change. Countries with the highest external debt, lacking their resources, often end up incurring further debt to cope with the consequences of these climatic events. More than 3.3 billion people live in countries where governments spend more on debt repayments than on essential services, such as health and education. The debt crisis and related austerity measures disproportionately affect women and girls, indigenous communities, and minority groups, as well as the majority of the population in low- and middle-income countries.

Countries in debt distress should not be forced to choose between servicing unsustainable debts and investing in essential areas such as education, health, or climate action.

#### *What is expected to be discussed at COP30*

Debt cancellation has historically been a low priority at UNFCCC conferences, but gained significant attention at the last COP, with [Nigerian President Bola Tinubu highlighting its importance](#). It is crucial to address the link between the UN financial framework, the debt service of low- and middle-income countries, and the costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as many indebted nations struggle to invest in climate action. At SB62 in Bonn, discussions centered on integrating debt considerations into the NCQG, but it was not a theme that gained much traction.

For COP30, these debt considerations within the NCQG remain a high priority, with continued advocacy for climate finance in the form of grants rather than loans, especially for adaptation to climate change and reparation for loss and damage caused by climate events. The aim is to solidify a UN framework that acknowledges the [link between climate vulnerability and sovereign debt](#), ensuring that financial support does not exacerbate existing burdens. The finalisation of the [Baku to Belém Roadmap at COP30](#) is expected to address shortcomings in the NCQG, including crucial finance for loss and damage and meaningful participation by rights holders.

*Important questions to be attentive to*

- ✓ How can ethical and historical facts help to rethink and reframe the discussion about NCQG and NDC?
- ✓ How can ecological debt arguments be better integrated into financial discussions?
- ✓ The consideration of the ethical and financial/practical reasons that frame and support the cancellation of debt for low- and middle-income countries as a positive contribution to fighting climate change.

## **SECOND CALL**

### **Strengthening the Loss and Damage Fund**

*What are we asking and why?*

We are calling for a Loss and Damage Fund that considers scientific data and the genuine needs of the most vulnerable countries and regions on the planet, ensuring funds are sufficient, timely, and transparently managed and disbursed.

Cultural patrimony (political, linguistic, religious) should also be considered when talking about Loss and Damage. The ‘Common but Differentiated Responsibilities’ and the ‘Ability to Pay’ principles should be guiding this process.

There is growing recognition of the link between climate vulnerability and sovereign debt, with an increasing call for non-debt-creating financing instruments. So, the focus at COP30 must be on climate finance that doesn't increase national debt. To achieve this scope, climate finance must prioritise grants over loans, particularly for adaptation, and for losses and damages.

*Current situation*

The Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are the national climate action plans (NAPs) and emissions reduction targets that each party to the Paris Agreement communicates to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The expression ‘loss and damage’, when used in the context of climate science, refers to the consequences of climate change that go beyond what can be avoided through reducing emissions and adapting to its impacts. It encompasses economic aspects, referring to tangible financial losses that can be quantified using market prices. The Non-Economic aspect of Loss and Damage (NELD) refers to negative impacts that are difficult or impossible to assign a monetary value. These impacts often affect factors such as human well-being, cultural heritage, and ecosystems. This is one of the arguments for bringing these conversations between climate change and biodiversity closer together.

The Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) was established to assist developing countries that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, helping them respond to loss

and damage. There is a growing emphasis on [integrating loss and damage into the NDC](#) to capture the full scope of the challenges and ensure adequate financial support. By integrating loss and damage into NDCs, countries can articulate the scale of these impacts and specify the financial support needed, which is crucial for the effective operation of the Loss and Damage Fund.

The establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund has been underway since the COP27 conference. A key expectation at COP30 is the [finalization of the Baku to Belém Roadmap](#), which will address [shortcomings in the New Collective Quantified Goal](#) (NCQG) on Climate Finance, including the crucial integration of finance for loss and damage, as well as the need for meaningful participation by rights holders. The [NCQG](#) is a key element of the Paris Agreement, designed to set a new financial target to support developing countries in their climate actions post-2025.

*What is expected to be discussed at COP30*

At the upcoming COP30, key discussions are expected to progress in critical areas advanced during SB62. These include further reviewing and shaping the [Warsaw International Mechanism](#) for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM) following the 2024 review, which organises expert groups to study issues like [slow-onset events](#) and non-economic losses for vulnerable countries, assisting the UNFCCC in advising affected nations. COP30 is anticipated to make significant progress and finalize the operationalization of the Loss and Damage Fund by resolving ongoing questions about its [hosting and implementation](#). A central debate is expected to ensure that loss and damage are explicitly considered within the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) and to explore the potential for enhanced inclusion of this consideration in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Additionally, the role of the [Santiago Network](#), a subsection of WIM, in providing technical assistance for loss and damage will be further reviewed and strengthened.

*Important questions to be attentive to*

- ✓ What concrete support mechanisms should the WIM and Santiago Network provide?
- ✓ What is the optimal setup for the Loss and Damage Fund to ensure it performs its intended function effectively?
- ✓ How will finance for loss and damage be included in the NCQG, ensuring that grants are prioritized over loans?
- ✓ Should NDCs include assessments of loss and damage, and how can climate finance avoid pushing vulnerable nations further into debt?

## **THIRD CALL**

### **Set targets for a just energy transition that aims to reduce CO2 emissions**

*What are we asking and why?*

The Paris Agreement seeks to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The generation of electricity and heat is the [largest source of greenhouse gas emissions](#), and these emissions must be reduced quickly. To do this, global economies must phase out the use of fossil fuels rapidly. A key step is the immediate [removal of all fossil fuel subsidies](#). These subsidies distort markets,

incentivise continued fossil fuel use, and undermine the economic viability of renewable energy.

More than half of the mineral resources needed to advance the energy transition [are located on or near the lands of Indigenous and peasant peoples](#). We advocate for a just energy transition that balances the urgency of decarbonisation objectives (clean energy) with respect for the rights of vulnerable communities. Therefore, a key component of justice in this transition must be the recognition of the rights of local and regional communities, and particularly the needs and rights of indigenous communities, children, and women, who are often the most affected and least considered in negotiations. Laws and regulations should be established at the international level to govern mining activities.

### *Current situation*

Considering that Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) are national climate action plans and emissions reduction targets that each party to the Paris Agreement communicates to the UNFCCC, [COP30 is a critical opportunity](#) to develop clear, ambitious targets for a just transition to cleaner energy that significantly reduces CO2 emissions, building on the groundwork laid at SB62.

The Paris Agreement sets a general goal for temperature, but it doesn't clearly say we must stop producing fossil fuels. We need clear and time-bound targets to phase out the use of coal, oil, and gas. [Trade Unions and NGOs](#) (TUNGO) should be considered, as they are fearful of losing their jobs amidst the transition processes. Developed countries must lead the way, [stopping the use of fossil fuels by 2040 and developing countries by 2050](#).

COP30 is the deadline for countries to submit their NDC, [translating long-term goals into concrete near-term actions on fossil fuels](#). A vital part of this process is setting targets to end fossil fuel subsidies, which can eventually [free up money for a genuinely fair and rapid transition](#).

### *What is expected to be discussed at COP30*

Building on the discussions at SB62, the discussion will focus on assessing and encouraging more ambitious NDCs and revitalising the [UAE Work Programme that began at COP28](#). This Work Programme aims to move beyond knowledge exchange toward concrete action, and COP30 will be the forum for adopting recommendations and mechanisms for their implementation, drawing on the considerations from SB62.

### *Important questions to be attentive to*

- ✓ How can the UAE Work Programme effectively move from knowledge exchange to concrete action at COP30, with precise mechanisms for supporting national transitions in both developed and developing countries, building on the recommendations from SB62?
- ✓ What specific guidance can COP30 provide to ensure NDCs include comprehensive just transition plans with measurable targets and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes?
- ✓ What robust action plan can COP30 develop for the rapid and complete phase-out of fossil fuel subsidies, including transparent accounting for how these funds will be redirected to support vulnerable communities and clean energy development?



## FOURTH CALL

### **Set clear goals to develop a global food system based on food sovereignty and agroecological practices**

*What are we asking and why?*

We are asking for the transformation of global food systems based on the principles of food sovereignty and agroecological practices, including the protection of indigenous seeds and traditional practices. This transformation can be supported under the UNFCCC by setting policy priorities, directing climate finance, and sharing best practices for food security and nutrition. [Food sovereignty](#) and [agroecology](#) would help build diverse food systems that are climate-resilient, incorporating built-in social justice requirements that respect human rights and the self-determination of marginalized communities.

*Current situation*

Food systems are estimated to contribute approximately [one-third](#) of greenhouse gas emissions. At the same time, the supply of nutrition for around [one-half](#) of the global population will be at risk from climate shocks by 2050. [Small and medium-sized farmers](#), 43% of whose labour force are women, produce between 50-70% of the food consumed by the world's population, using only 25-30% of the agricultural land, 30% of the water resources, and 20% of the fossil fuel consumption devoted to agriculture. This reality underscores the urgent need to transition towards biodiverse local food systems and move them from the margins to the centre of climate finance discussions.

The NDCs increasingly recognise the potential of agroecologically based food systems to enhance resilience against climate change. Nevertheless, there remains a pronounced need to [mainstream agroecology principles](#) in NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). Current NDCs [underestimate](#) the cost of transforming food systems by approximately \$900 billion, which is more than four times the currently requested \$201.5 billion, thereby distorting the broader discussion on climate finance.

Building on the Koronivia Joint Work on Agriculture, the Sharm el-Sheikh Joint Work on Implementation of Climate Action on Agriculture and Food Security ([SJWA](#)), established at COP27, aims to operationalize climate action in the agricultural sector. It is an important forum for policy discussions on food and agriculture under the UNFCCC, playing a role in shaping Parties' national plans (NDCs and NAPs) and the actions of other UNFCCC bodies, including the financial mechanisms.

At SB62, the SJWA held its first in-session [workshop](#), which explored the topic of “systemic and holistic approaches to implementation of climate action on agriculture, food systems (this does not preclude other approaches) and food security, understanding, cooperation and integration into plans.” The encouragement of holistic approaches and food systems framing was promising, as were the interventions of speakers from civil society and the chair of the Committee on World Food Security (the highest and most inclusive body in global food governance). Still, the favourability of discussions towards food sovereignty and agroecology was mixed.



### *What is expected to be discussed at COP30*

COP30 will focus on [NDCs by advocating for the incorporation of specific measures](#) related to the design and upscaling of sustainable food systems, including the encouragement of agroecological practices and the promotion of short supply chains. [The NCQG negotiations at COP30 present a crucial opportunity](#) to significantly increase funding for food systems transformation, ensuring finance for sustainable and resilient food systems becomes a climate priority.

Draft conclusions from the first SJWA workshop held in June will be negotiated at SB63 in November 2025. The language used to summarize workshop content will play a role in determining which points and perspectives from the workshop are amplified in climate policy. Submissions to the online portal will be summarized in an annual synthesis report prepared by the UNFCCC Secretariat and are due by 31 December. Financing the transformation of food systems is likely to be an important and controversial theme in these submissions.

### *Important questions to be attentive to*

- ✓ How can concrete mechanisms be established within the NCQG to ensure increased funding for sustainable local or regional food systems?
- ✓ How to strengthen and expand the scope of the Sharm el-Sheikh joint work
- ✓ How can COP30 promote agricultural systems that conserve and enhance nature's matrix?
- ✓ What concrete measures will COP30 ensure for the active participation of smallholder farmers, Indigenous peoples, women, and other marginalised groups in developing policies for a global sustainable food sovereignty system?

## **FURTHER READINGS**

### ***Debt***

[\*Debt Justice Position Paper\*, Caritas Europa](#)

[\*Weathering the Storm\*, Caritas Australia](#)

[\*Blueprints for a Greener Tomorrow: A Conversation With Prime Minister Mia Mottley of Barbados\*, Council on Foreign Relations](#)

[\*Healthy Debt on a Healthy Planet\*, Expert Review on Debt, Nature and Climate](#)

### ***Loss and Damage***

[\*Human Rights and Loss and Damage: Key Messages for the UNFCCC in 2025\*, The Loss and Damage Collaboration](#)

[\*Cross-border, cascading climate risks and the LDC Group: Catalysing management options within the UNFCCC\*, Adaptation Without Borders](#)

[\*What to expect for the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage in 2025\*, Heinrich Boll Stiftung](#)

## **Just Energy Transition**

[Resisting the Empire of Fossil Fuels: A Strategy For COP30 in Lula's Brazil, Groupe d'études géopolitiques](#)  
[NDC Checklist for Just Energy Transition, WWF](#)  
[Mutually Reinforcing: How a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Complements the Paris Agreement and UNFCCC, Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative](#)  
[Rebooting the Just Transition for the Long Haul, Just Transition Finance Lab](#)

## **Sustainable Food Sovereignty System based on agroecology**

[Public Climate Finance for Food Systems Transformation \(2024\), Global Alliance for the Future of Food](#)  
[Integrating Deforestation and Conversion-Free Supply Chains into NBSAPs, WWF](#)  
[Increasing Ambition in NDCs through Agriculture and Food Systems Innovation, United Nations Foundation](#)  
[A Toolkit for National Action on Climate, Biodiversity, and Water in Agriculture and Food Systems, Climate Focus](#)  
[Global Public Investment. A Climate Finance Solution for West Africa, CERAP](#)  
[Developing and promoting agroecological innovations within country program strategies to address agroecosystem resilience in production landscapes: a guide, COMDEKS](#)  
[A New Strategy for Transforming Food and Land Use Systems, FOLU](#)  
[Agrifood Systems in Nationally Determined Contributions: Global Analysis, FAO](#)  
[Integration of Agroecology in Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\) and National Adaptation Plans \(NAPs\) in Africa, AFSA](#)  
[The Triple Gap in Finance for Agrifood Systems, CPI](#)  
[Mainstreaming Agroecology Principles for Food Governance, Food Forward NDCs](#)

## **SB62 Summary Reports**

[Summary Report 16–26 June \(2025\), Earth Negotiations Bulletin](#)  
[Key outcomes from the June UN climate conference \(2025\), Carbon Brief](#)  
[What happened on Loss and Damage at the June Climate Meetings \(2025\), Loss and Damage Collaboration](#)