



World Council of Churches

**To Bonn and Beyond:
Act Now with Justice and Peace**

Interfaith Statement to the Plenary of the High Level Ministerial Segment
23rd Session of the Conference of the Parties (**COP23**)
13th Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the
Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (**CMP13**)
2nd Part of the 1st Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the
Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (**CMA1.2**)
United Nations Climate Change Conference
Bonn, Germany, under the Presidency of Fiji
Thursday 16th November 2017

Mr. President,
His Excellency Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama of Fiji,
Distinguished Participants,
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Bula, vinaka!

As communities of faith we see the Earth as a blessing. *“She supports life and is the basis of all our economies. She conveys beauty and evokes our recognition of something greater than ourselves. She is our temple, our mosque, our sanctuary, our cathedral. Our home.”*¹

Climate change is threatening our only home. Perhaps nowhere is this more striking than in Oceania. Already many islands are struggling with recurrent, powerful storms that take lives and destroy livelihoods and sources of sustenance. As sea levels rise, oceans acidify and corals wither, our sisters and brothers in the Pacific region are increasingly confronted with the prospect of displacement and forced migration as well as the erosion of territories, identities and cultures.

In the face of such suffering and loss, many of our religious teachings call us to bear witness and do justice to the impoverished and vulnerable. As the message of the Pacific Conference of Churches to COP 23 states, *“We exercise our prophetic voice as churches and believers...to amplify the cries of our people and Moana who are directly or indirectly affected by climate change and encourage the spirit of stewardship among ourselves as custodians of God’s creation.”*

People living in the Pacific contribute least to greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. It is therefore a matter of justice that wealthy nations responsible for the bulk of global emissions provide financial and other forms of support to income-poor, vulnerable countries, enabling the latter to adapt and build resilience to a warming climate as well as compensating for loss and damage.

¹ *Walk Gently*, COP 23 Interfaith Climate Statement (http://www.interfaithclimatestatement.org/the_statement)

Still, the loss of lives and ancestral lands – one’s existential and spiritual roots – cannot truly be recompensed. Loss and damage must be minimised if not prevented in the first place. This means that we have to keep global temperature increase to not more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

As faith communities we reiterate that human beings *“are not the owners of the Earth but are its custodians...responsible for the care of its rivers, lakes, seas and oceans and all the flora and creatures that depend on the Earth for life.”*² It is then our moral and ethical responsibility to take collective and immediate actions to address climate change and to safeguard life on our planet. There is no time to lose.

Those of us in privileged spaces ought to examine and transform our lifestyles and consumption patterns, establishing communities of good practice. We acknowledge that we have much to learn from Indigenous people and women in the Pacific and other parts of the world. They are among those who experience the effects of a disrupted climate first. At the same time, they are defenders of bodies of water and forests, models of simple living as well as keepers of traditional knowledge and practices that are essential to building a more climate-resilient Pacific and a more sustainable Earth.

We emphasise that lifestyle corrections are not enough. We must continue to work for urgent changes in our growth-oriented systems of investment, production, distribution and consumption with a view to overcoming poverty and transitioning to a zero carbon economy by 2050. In a world where one in eight people remain hungry, we must hold together these two objectives.

We therefore call upon COP 23 to:

- increase nationally determined contributions to meet the target of 1.5 degrees Celsius warming above pre-industrial levels;
- ensure the transfer of financial and other resources to small island states and other poor, vulnerable countries as funding for adaptation and resilience-building and as compensation for loss and damage; and
- deliver concrete action on loss and damage by further developing the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage.

We are on a pilgrimage of justice and peace. We tread gently, but with purpose. We are in search of a new life for all of God’s creation: a life lived in justice and peace with our own consciences, among and between human communities, in local, national and global markets and with the Earth and all its beings.

www.oikoumene.org

² COP 23 Multifaith Charter (<http://cop23multifaith.com/charter/>)