

# Asia Pacific Women of Faith Network Paper for CCRP 3<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Ecological Civilisations

Presented by Philippa Rowland, Chair of Religions for Peace Australia

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## ***Introduction - Facing the Threat of the Global Climate Crisis Together***

The Asia Pacific Women of Faith Network (APWoFN) held its first of three climate change webinars on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> November. It was a frank and powerful analysis of current regional experiences of escalating climate change. This paper is drawn from its many valuable contributions\*.

Climate change is upon us. The daunting reality is we are living through the predicted *increased frequency and intensity of extreme events*, as shown by growing regional evidence and experience of unprecedented wildfires, floods, cyclones, melting glaciers, volatile temperatures and rising sea levels.

APWoFN learnt about faith-led responses to climate change situations in Pakistan, the Pacific, the Philippines, India, Korea, East Nusa Tenggara (Indonesia), Nepal, China, Japan and Australia.

Many stories reveal how people of faith respond by showing moral courage and taking strategic actions as they work together to deal with the challenges presented by climate change in their communities.

Our world may already be reaching and crossing unrecognised tipping points, as current climate change trends set off interconnected cascades (eg glacial melt, intensifying fire storms, ecosystem collapse).

Faith communities have a vital role in helping to chart the pathways ahead to a safe climate future. The best time for action was yesterday, the next best time is today. There is no time for delay.

## ***Complicating Factors***

Key needs for all people are Food, Water, Energy, Health, Housing, Freedom of movement, speech and religion. Implementing known climate solutions can be hampered by powerful vested interests, poverty, and complicated geo-politics. Escalating climatic events disrupt production, while Russia's ongoing invasion and war in Ukraine have further destabilized global energy and food supply chains.

Humanity depends on the healthy complex webs of our ecosystems, yet "with biodiversity declining faster than any other time in human history, our quality of life, our well-being, & our economies are under threat." At COP15 Antonio Guterres challenged our "bottomless appetite for unchecked and unequal economic growth, as humanity has become a weapon of mass extinction - urging leaders to adopt and deliver an ambitious peace pact with nature and deliver a green healthy future for all."<sup>1</sup>

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\* Note: attribution to APWoFN quotes is given above abridged contributions – published references listed at the end.

## *Unique Roles of Faith Communities*

Transforming our relationships with nature and energy have become central challenges for all humanity. Faith Leaders can provide our communities with the moral courage, wisdom and compassion to face our urgent responsibilities to future generations of all life-forms that share our common home, the Earth. The trusted voices of Faith leaders have a vital role in the climate crisis, as they support and advocate for our communities, led by faith to act with wise compassion informed by science. Our places of worship provide connection and access to care in many forms – spiritual, physical, medical, emotional, practical.

## *APWoFN Examples of Climate Solutions led by Faith Communities/Leaders*

Trusted Leadership - Connections with Communities (Ikramulla, Mangililo)  
Ending the influence of fossil fuel lobbyists on global climate negotiations (Sison, Bhagwan)  
Rapid transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy/green hydrogen (Bhagwan, Rowland)  
Regreening our cities to become healthy Climate-Positive Ecosystems (Sison, Hashimoto)  
Sharing Models for meaningful Climate Action – (Ikramullah, Bhagwan, Hashimoto, Rowland)  
Places of Worship as places of Refuge and Access to Care – (Mangililo, Ikramulla, Hashimoto)  
Prayers, Solidarity and Compassion – (Manandhar, Ikramullah, Bhanot, Lee, Mangililo)  
Turning our Prayers into Action with Moral Courage (Bhanot, Serapung, Manhong, Lee)

## **Feedback from Group Discussions:**

**Rapporteur Elga Sarapung, Indonesia:** From our group with our speaker, Professor Manhong, we agree that our first orientation will be, or should be, about common action. And what does it mean? It means action, not just talk, but how to build awareness among leaders, religious leaders and also among the communities. The second idea is sharing information exchange, our stories, our experiences through essays, the writings that we need to share with each other, because we have very rich experience in each of our countries

**Rapporteur Suphatmet Yunyasit, Thailand:** We spoke a lot about sustainability, because it is so important that we keep the momentum. Let's say we left happy, but I asked for the interesting project to protect the Earth. How to develop strategies to create a systematic and sustainable way to engage people in these activities. Maybe we need to promote more and get people on board, volunteers who can help us push the project forward. We also talked about networking – it is important to have a network. Maybe we can start from Japan reaching out to other countries like they already do in Myanmar, in the Philippines, right. So we reach out to more countries, and all those that joint action into developing a better plan to really learn and share from one another. We need to learn more about city projects, because it's more in the countryside, where we have plenty of land to do many activities. What is happening in the city context that we can share and learn from other countries.

**Rapporteur Haidi Fajardo, Philippines:** Some of the things we learnt can be applied by different countries. Education is needed. We need to understand how money works vis-à-vis climate change issues. We need to know where to put our energies as religious people. We need to understand how market forces work, because lobbyists are often influence business, and largely influence the decision-makers, in itself a challenge. If our local communities can reach out to be equally influential to the decision-makers, that can help a lot. Religious leaders can set the example. In the Philippines parishes have started solarizing their parishes, chapels, meeting places. So if religious leaders set that example and drive their members in that direction, then not only prayers, but action will be taking place in our communities.

## **In Our Own Words – Extracts from Presentations to the APWoFN Climate Seminar 1**

### **Rev Dr Yoshinori Shinohara, Secretary General, Asian Conference of Religions for Peace**

This issue of climate change is a matter of life and death for all of us, causing significant damage with extraordinary increase in temperatures, drought, warming of oceans and sea level rise, food shortages, poverty and forced migration, affecting the most vulnerable communities. Some four billion people have been affected by climate-related disasters. Four of the six largest cities threatened by climate change are in Asia. COP27 in Egypt did not produce effective measures, yet climate change severity is increasing rapidly. We have to make tough choices. Either we stop our dependence on fossil fuels or our dependence on fossil fuels will stop our lives. The key is to listen to the voices of those affected by climate change. We must listen and respond.

### **Ms Huma Ikramulla, Secretary General of Religions for Peace Pakistan:**

Pakistan was hit by super floods, with one-third of the country under water, caused by torrential rainfall and extreme climate patterns, resulting in very hot weather, and rapidly melting glaciers causing the rivers to surge. The rains would not stop – they went on and on. So what actually happened in Pakistan?

The extent of the damage in Pakistan has been reported all over the media, the number of houses damaged, the school facilities, the children, people injured and killed, the livestock killed – everything totally or partially destroyed. As a result, there is a food crisis. People are so hungry. They cannot even cook food in those places, the sewage line has been damaged, firewood is wet, so people are distributing cooked food or dry rations that can be mixed with water. Water is an issue - clean water must be supplied. Homes have been destroyed, covered in stagnant water, loss of livelihoods. People are getting skin diseases, and malaria and dengue fever have spread quickly in stagnant water.

Education, primary healthcare – every aspect has been damaged by the fingerprints of climate change present in these unprecedented floods. Schools have been destroyed. Children and women are the most affected in the ongoing economic crisis, with rising inflation. The price of basic vegetables like tomatoes or potatoes for simple cooking, which we all used to buy, has gone up from 50-80 rupees to 400 rupees, so much inflation as a result of these floods induced by climate change.

Now is the stage of Recovery and Reconstruction to build back a better future. In these floods, the *distribution of aid by religious leaders has been to everybody in all communities – with no distinction of caste or creed, or religion*. People just helping each other as happened in Covid, for the sake of humanity. All the religious leaders, the civil society organisations, the Governments standing together along with the international donors to help build Pakistan back and to counter the effects of climate change. The UN General Secretary and other donor agencies visited Pakistan.

I would like us to take a Pledge today, that we all work for the betterment of humanity, where religious leaders, parliamentarians, civil society, organisations and government departments, international donors serve with the motto of **“Service Above Self and Leaving No-one Behind”**. Let us all pledge to work together for a harmonious, peaceful, united world with the aim of protection, conservation and sustainable development of a healthy environment not only for ourselves but for our future generations.

## **Deepali Bhanot, General Secretary Religions for Peace, India in response:**

When there is a climate crisis like this, we will have a new set of climate refugees, because they are now being forced to run out of their homes and take shelter elsewhere, where they might not be wanted and where they might not be welcome. Therefore, these climate refugees are another group that we have to look out for and care for them. So now our governments have more work on their hands. Also how do refugees cope when they come back, rebuilding their houses? For everybody this is not so easy, and how many people can access those government funds, because government funds are also very limited? Therefore, this is a major crisis and now is the time for the world to sit up and see for ourselves how we can mindfully use our resources so that we can avoid these kinds of disasters in future. Thank you.

## **Rev James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches:**

In our Pacific region, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and many other communities and countries are calling for the *Non-Proliferation Treaty on Fossil Fuels*. The Pacific Conference of Churches is strongly advocating for this, and supports Vanuatu's call for an *Advisory Opinion on Human Rights and Climate Change*. These are some mechanisms that we continue to support outside the UNFCCC process.

This key element of our commitments to keeping to 1.5°C is commitment to ending the use of fossil fuel, phasing out in a very realistic term not just coal but gas and oil as well. It is very important that we think about what we call *'the large fossil fuel bombs'* – these are projects either already given the go ahead by countries who ought to be friends of the Pacific or are in the pipeline. *These projects, some 425 of them, have the potential to take us more than twice over the 1.5oC degree threshold.*

The challenge we say to our dear friends, our Pacific family, to the government of Australia, as we've seen major shifts this year already. *The reality is you cannot offer us money on one hand to deal with Loss and Damage, you cannot just talk about Adaptation, without addressing the issue of Mitigation.* How do we reduce carbon emissions in this world? The rapid change needed to care for our Common Home, the commitments to divestment from fossil fuel industries, by organisations, faith communities, the ending of subsidies for fossil fuels companies and projects – all of these things need to happen Now.

So, from the Pacific, we watch with great dismay. We are mindful that this is not just a government's responsibility. *What is the role of people of faith?* This is where we say, if we know that our faith calls us to justice, not only for human beings but for all of creation, justice for the environment, what is our role as stewards? Stewards not only of each other's lives, but also stewards of the environment, of all Creation. *How do we mobilise as people of faith?*

*This is the only home we have. I always tell people, we are busy. We cannot be so busy looking to the next life that we are not doing the work we need to do in this life for those who are still here with us.*

## **Philippa Rowland (Chair of Religions for Peace, Australia) :**

I pay my respect to our elders, past, present and emerging. Australia is a vast and ancient land, with abundant renewable energy in sun and wind and sea. Yet we are deeply vulnerable to increasing climate change impacts and over-reliant on fossil fuels. Our current floods, while minor compared with the impacts in Pakistan, have hard hit communities along the Eastern seaboard, following soon after our devastating 2019 Black Summer bushfires affected many communities and decimated biodiversity.

We've known for years of need to reduce emissions to preserve life. In 2018 I coordinated an interfaith gathering in Parliament House in Canberra, raising the alarm on the International Panel of Climate Change IPCC 1.5oC Report<sup>2</sup>. A wonderful group of faith leaders shared prayers, and IPCC scientist, Dr. Mark Howden explained we need greater collective ambition – not just from one person, one household or one community or one country - but from all of us – together. He distilled the IPCC report thus:

Every Half Degree Matters  
Every Year Matters  
Every Choice Matters

We need to pay attention to all contributions from each country, each community. Australia is highly vulnerable to climate change, yet we are still opening up new natural gas and coal mines.

***It is no longer acceptable to pretend that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.***

We have an opportunity to turn our prayers into practice. Many know the UN Treaty on the Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to reduce the threat of nuclear annihilation. A UN Treaty on the Proliferation of Fossil Fuels recognises fossil fuels now also threaten our world. This letter in the Australian Financial Review 13th October 2022 was signed by 100 +very senior Faith leaders across Australia and the Pacific<sup>3</sup>:

*Dear Prime Minister Albanese,*

*We are grateful for your government's efforts to take the climate crisis seriously. Yet Australia is a wealthy country that profits from exports that are causing the crisis. We hear the cries of anguish from those most vulnerable in the human family who are losing their lives, livelihoods, and homes through climate fuel disasters. We humbly and respectfully request that:*

- *Australia stops approving new coal and gas projects, ends public subsidies for coal and gas projects;*
- *Fully respects first nation people's rights to protect country and sea;*
- *Restarts our contributions to the UN Green Climate Fund;*
- *Assists extractive industry workers to transition and prosper in jobs in more sustainable industries.*
- *Lastly, we call on the Government to actively participate in creating and endorsing a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty.*

*The current level of warming is not safe this moment in history calls for an urgent, courageous, visionary response, especially from those in power. Yours sincerely, ...*

There are co-benefits from climate action. The good news is that we have options, with alternatives to coal-fired power, to petrol-driven cars, in terms of our food supply. So we have pathways to move forward. Australia can show real leadership in the move to 100% renewable energy - wind and solar are now the cheapest sources of generation, with growing investment in Green Hydrogen as a real opportunity. We hope Australia will swiftly increase its positive contribution and uphold the need for Climate Justice.

**Professor Lilian Sison – Secretary General, Religions for Peace, Philippines:**

Here is what was agreed at COP26 and the nine climate actions that were to be implemented at COP27. First, each nation made their nationally determined commitment (NDC) to achieve our goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C and to reach Net Zero Emissions by 2050. Second is ramping up Renewables and Phasing out Fossil Fuels, third is Climate Finance for Adaptation and Repatriation for Loss and Damage in developing countries. Then reaching Net Zero Emissions by 2050, Greening the Financial Sector, Curbing Methane, Halting Deforestation, Greening Cities in the race to net zero and shift to Electric Cars. Rev. James covered climate finance and phasing out fossil fuels, the hallmark of COP27.

Developing nations were happy with the commitment of the Advanced countries to fund Loss and Damage, as well as Adaptation measures. However, fossil fuels are the real culprit for climate change. Now we all belong to the Earth and the Earth is one organism. We are part of that organism, just like any other creature. The only difference is that we are intelligent creatures and created so many human institutions – political institutions, our economics, religion, businesses and corporations. These institutions are often at loggerheads – this disunity causes damage to humankind and the planet. 500 fossil fuel lobbyists were in COP26 in Glasgow, and in COP27, there were 636 fossil fuel lobbyists, negotiating with decision-makers to protect their industries and to protect their money. As long as these lobbyists participate in COP meetings, we can never get real commitment to phase out fossil fuels. There were shifting commitments because of other events. Europe was unable to meet their targets because of the war in Ukraine, and loss of energy from Russia, so they had to look for other energy sources, fossil fuels for that matter. The pandemic also shifted commitments from some nations.

I am dismayed by the effect on the results of the COP meetings. So, what are we going to do? As Faith leaders, we have our communities, our congregations, our resources, our physical space. We can all contribute to the greening of cities. We can all mitigate climate change.

This is the City's Race to Zero Emissions. Urban greening can save species and cool warming cities. By greening our cities with street trees, urban parks, community and rooftop gardens, we can keep cool, reverse the steady erosion of life and foster happiness and general well-being. Afforesting cities is a nature-based solution. We can all participate and mobilise our communities. Greenery in urban spaces improves the microclimate, reduces pollution and lessens climate impacts, contributes to mental and physical wellbeing. It offers vital refuge for biodiversity and promotes the rewilding of urban centres.

### **Deepali Bhanot, Co-President Religions for Peace Asia**

The landmark agreement at COP27 of a loss and damage fund is an achievement. Yet we need to ponder our role as people of faith, to commit ourselves to climate justice and justice for creation. We need to revisit our Scriptures to combine modern technology with the wisdom of our traditions.

According to the Hindu tradition, there is a deep spiritual relationship and an interconnectedness between all living beings and the environment. The Divine presence provides harmony and oneness with nature and the environment, calls upon all to control greed, to exercise restraint on mindless consumption patterns, and personal behaviour. To maintain the spiritual, ethical, moral order of creation, the Upanishad mentions one must enjoy earthly pleasures with a sense of detachment without craving possessions of others.

This earth, whether rivers, lakes, mountains, forests, and vegetation, is venerated as mother of life and we, as custodians, need to protect each and every element on this earth. We are not the owners of planet Earth, we are mere trustees of its resources. It is our moral obligation to use this earth with care and love.

Mahatma Gandhi's concept of trusteeship was based on his faith in the law of non-possession and his religious belief that everything belonged to God. If an individual had more than his respective share, that person became a trustee of that portion for the people. His idea of trusteeship provide solutions for our present challenges: consume only what we need, without depriving others, take care of nature's resources and moral responsibility of the rich to take care of the welfare of the poor and the underprivileged in India.

In the recent launch of “Mission Life - Lifestyle for Environment”<sup>4</sup>, our honourable Prime Minister Modi makes it clear that climate change goes beyond policy-making and cannot be left to governments and international organizations alone. It encourages individuals, families, and communities towards mindful consumption of resources, and to reduce carbon footprints at individual levels.

Mission Life plans to create and nurture a global network of individuals, namely, Pro Planet People (P.3) who will have a shared commitment to adopt and promote an environment friendly lifestyles. The P.3 mission seeks to create an ecosystem to reinforce and enable environment friendly behaviour to restore the Earth. We need to do our bit, however small, and pass it on to future generations by educating them so that our communities can inherit a greener and a better earth.

**Ms. Christina Lee, KCRP, Member of the Focolare Movement, Committee for Promoting Christian Unity and Interreligious Dialogue of Catholic Bishops Conference of Korea**

Creation of the loss and damage fund is a partial success of CO27. After 30 years of discussion, we will see rich nations pay poorer countries for damage caused by climate change, like flooding and drought. More than money and reparations, it is a new way of solidarity and social friendship, as Pope Francis indicates, to build a more just and peaceful world. As Rev. Bhagwan said, people of faith should ‘get out of their comfort zone’ in order ‘to listen to the cry of the earth and humanity’.

KCRP, the Korean Chapter of Religions for Peace, created a new Commission on ecological issues. Last month regions of South Korea held a Forum to launch a *Campaign for Carbon Neutrality and Transition Society*, sponsored by the Government’s Ministry of Culture. This was followed by seven similar occasions, organized by each of seven religions.

The Focolare Movement has released its EcoPlan, following a forum held to inspire members and communities to re-examine their lifestyles, and to verify the ecological sustainability of its structures and activities, and to express the spiritual roots of our ecological commitment, emphasizing in particular its strong ecumenical and interreligious dimension. The Focolare Movement has strengthened its strategic partnerships, working with organizations like the *Laudato Si’* Movement and FaithInvest.

**Dr Ira Desiawanti Mangililo, Lecturer of Hebrew Scripture at Artha Wacana Christian University, Kupang – East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia**

Tropical cyclones are more frequent in Indonesia. In April 2020, Cyclone Seroja brought strong winds, flash floods, landslides, and fallen trees. Thousands of people from infants to the elderly were forced to flee. Many people died while others went missing. Many houses were damaged; fields and plantations destroyed; boats and fishing equipment lost; Livestock washed away by floods. Many lost their livelihood. The Christian Evangelical church in Timor or GMIT formed a disaster response team at the city level and in local congregations. Primarily attention was given to the most affected victims. Poor people in houses on riverbeds were worst affected by Cyclone Seroja as they couldn’t afford to buy houses in safe areas. Their houses were destroyed because the materials used to construct them were inadequate. Many of them were farmers and fishermen who depended on agriculture and seafood as a food source. We saw that the poor were more vulnerable, and suffered from disaster, and that catastrophic events further increased their poverty. During the Seroja Cyclone I worked very closely with our church, open to people who had to flee homes that were already destroyed. We made sure that they have a good shelter.

## **Lessons Learnt from Cyclone Seroja:**

- 1: Commitment needed to strengthen Church capacity to respond and serve better in disaster-prone areas.
- 2: Mitigation and prevention just as necessary as rehabilitation and reconstruction. Various churches and partner institutions provided training on essential aspects that must be prepared to prevent & face disasters.
- 3: Commitment to public education on protecting the natural environment and promote environmentally friendly lifestyles & reforestation of critical lands; encourage Government to draft local regulation related to slash and burn agriculture and sustainable environmental management planning and public education on renewable energy (wind and solar to reduce the use of fossil energy sources).
- 4: During reconstruction, GMIT collaborated with the Indonesian Institute of Architects to educate local builders on how to build homes to meet operational standards and survive better in disaster-prone areas. Effort to empower local builders, instead of external builders to maintain expertise, skills and local wisdom in re-building houses that have been destroyed. Our motto is Rebuild, Better - Rebuild, Safer.
- 5: Focus on economic development to strengthen food security. Women have a significant role and great potential to be agents of change in climate change control action. If given the same access as men to technology and resources, women can increase agricultural production and improve food security.
- 6: GMIT is developing a Disaster Theology, born from the reflection of the people who struggle to understand God's will for humans and all creation. With this disaster, the result of these reflections will be published, together with several liturgies focusing on living in greater harmony with nature.

We continue to work with our government to ensure that we all are on the same page to work together for the betterment of our world. A crisis of this magnitude can only be overcome together, thanks to the solidarity shown by friends and colleagues all over the world who care and show their sincere love.

## **Rev'd Professor Lin Manhong. Assoc. General Secretary of the China Christian Council, Professor of Christian ethics, and Academic Dean of Nanjing Union Theological Seminary**

In Chinese religious circles, despite their different religious beliefs, all take environmental protection as a significant issue, closely related to the continued survival of humankind. Chinese Christianity often reminds believers that God has entrusted humans with the responsibilities of governing and managing the earth. We should not trample on and destroy Nature, we must follow the Creator's example to tend and care for the Nature like a humble servant. Humanity is not the centre of the world. Nature has its intrinsic value. Humans and Nature are equal in God's Creation.

In 2019 the Chinese Church took valuing the creation of God and building a better life as the theme of Sermon Exchange project of the year, where messages on this topic were shared in various provinces. In June 2022, China's five major religions, including the Chinese Protestant churches, issued a Joint Initiative on advocating frugality and forbidding extravagance advocating green and environment, friendly venues for religious activities, with positive responses from the religious circles in China.



Since 2019 CCRP has held international seminars with the theme of Religious and Ecological Civilization. Leaders of Religions for Peace and representatives of member organizations are invited to share wisdom and experience. The third seminar, co-hosted by CCRP and Religions for Peace, is on December 21st.

CCRP participated in post-disaster reconstruction work after the Nepalese earthquake and the Philippine tsunami. Through helping countries affected by natural disasters, CCRP expresses the love of the Chinese religious circles and put into practice the mission of building a community which is a shared on

### **Takashi Hashimoto, Deputy Director of Peacebuilding Dept, Religions for Peace Japan**

Religions for Peace Japan has a partnership with about fifty religious organizations, including Shinto, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, and other religions, working together with the Japanese government, local governments, the United Nations and the Non-Government organisations.

The Climate Crisis Task Force launched the **Forest of Integrated Life Project** in 2017, in 10,000 acres located in Tokorozawa city, Saitama, after agreement on "Protecting Greenery Area around Horiguchi Tenman Shrine". The land will be a place where not only plants, but also living beings are nurtured.

The climate crisis task force in cooperation with local governments and the private sector organised with the landlord owners of the three families to conduct four tree-planting sessions on the ten thousand acres.

Where once only bamboo stood, about one hundred and fifty trees, including Konara Oaks, Mountain Cherry and Maple trees have been planted during the cold season, as trees die due to the heat if planted in summer. Tree plantings were conducted three times in February 2018, February 2019 and November 2022 in this month.

Shokurin/Afforestation are plantings solely to produce timber and replace trees in the mountains after logging, while our project is Shokuju/tree planting mainly of shade trees in commemorative events for the enjoyment of the people. Three important points in summary.

First: promoting environmental education for urban people, who - by engaging tree planting activities - realise the importance of nature and become more interested in the protecting the environment.

Secondly, strengthening partnerships and cooperation among religious groups and the private sector, local governments and experts creates a strong foundation for activities. The project can encourage stakeholders, including government, to integrate 'satomia' or conservation vision, and mobilize members of religious groups

Finally, the importance of Spirituality. By conveying the Shinto Buddhist ideas about the forest during our tree plantings, participants can understand the importance of forests on the oneness of nature and the human beings.

### **Emeritus Professor Desmond Cahill, Moderator of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace**

Thanks to Women's Committee for arranging this discussion series on climate change. I want to pick up Dr. Lilian Sison's emphasis on the greening of cities in the Asia Pacific region. We have 29 of the world's 48 Mega cities in Asia - cities with over ten million people. Among the cities said to be most at risk from climate change, 3 in particular are in Asia - Jakarta, Dhaka and Bangkok - with others elsewhere and in the Pacific, particularly at risk from sea level rises and high tides.

We now talk about, not only green cities, but also blue cities where water is managed effectively. A blue city is where there is an integrated management of water, able to address the risks of too much water, too little water, and too polluted water. We now live in a world of greater risk, limited controllability, and an uncertain predictability. So global climate change makes our cities the hubs, the nodes in the processing and the process of combating climate change. Religious leaders should make their places of worship into green places of worship, as a start in educating their own faith communities and beyond their communities.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

The opportunity to limit the rapid global warming to 1.5°C or 2°C is still within reach but slipping away from us with each passing year. We still have time if we act swiftly and decisively and collectively.

In discussion across our region, may we develop a shared vision toward a safe climate future for us all, in which each country is working to our strengths and helping our neighbours.

We must give each other courage to be a bold voice for a safe climate future, encouraging good choices for reducing emissions in our own and neighboring countries, and provide a moral compass for right action for the sake of future generations. Each faith and community can provide demonstration models for climate action, like the tree planting projects and renewable energy transitions as we have heard. RfP Australia stands ready and willing to help however we can.

In closing September's peace meetings, Azza Karam mentioned a global vision of peace must combine work on the practical and political level. To quote Sandra Diaz at the recent #COP15 Biodiversity talks: "While biodiversity loss is an ecological problem, the solutions are social, economic and political. What is needed is transformative change across these factors."<sup>5</sup>

I believe our moral imperative is to work together, to reconcile, to heal our earth and our relationships with each other. In line with the ancient philosophy of Confucius: "Judge people by their deeds, not just by their words", let us be trustworthy and practice what we preach. In this time of crisis, our practice is even more important than our words. May our prayers and shared efforts bear fruit for the sake of all beings.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenfield, P. (2022) Humanity has become 'weapon of mass extinction', UN head tells Cop15 launch. The Guardian online, accessed 6 December 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/dec/06/canada-leads-calls-to-reverse-nature-loss-as-cop15-opens-in-montreal>

<sup>2</sup> International Panel on Climate Change – IPCC (2018) IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C <https://unfccc.int/topics/science/workstreams/cooperation-with-the-ipcc/ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-15-degc>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Religious Response to Climate Change and Pacific Island Faith Leaders Open Letter on Climate Justice to Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, published in the Australian Financial Review Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October, p15 [https://www.arcc.org.au/open\\_letter\\_climate\\_justice](https://www.arcc.org.au/open_letter_climate_justice)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news\\_updates/pm-launches-global-initiative-lifestyle-for-the-environment-life-movement/](https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pm-launches-global-initiative-lifestyle-for-the-environment-life-movement/)

<sup>5</sup> For more biodiversity, culture and climate change information, see: <https://www.climateheritage.org/press/culture-at-cop15>