



From Paris to Fiji: COP23 marks insufficient step towards climate justice and action

Caritas Internationalis participated in the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23) in Bonn, from 6 to 17 November. Significantly, this was the first COP presided by a Small Island Party, the Oceanian island of Fiji, one of the world's areas that most suffer the impacts of climate change.

The Caritas confederation was represented by a delegation of members coming from Europe, Africa and Oceania. Based on the encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which calls for an integrated approach to caring for the environment while caring for the poor, Caritas organisations brought their views, experiences and messages throughout COP23.

Agriculture

After tense negotiations between developing and developed countries, States participating in COP23 agreed on a decision to work on agriculture. Civil society organisations, among them the Caritas confederation, had been asking for the adoption of a programme of work for the past 2 years. Caritas Internationalis welcomes this decision, especially looking at the urgency caused by food insecurity in the world. While all countries agreed to eradicate hunger by 2030 with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, the latest UN report on the state of food insecurity in the world clearly explains that climate change puts us on the wrong track: for the first time in 10 years, the number of people suffering food insecurity is rising, with climate change being a main cause. It was about time that countries agreed to address the issue explicitly and consistently. Caritas hopes this decision will allow to ensure the right to adequate food for the poorest, promote an agricultural transition based on agro ecology and address cuts in greenhouse gas emissions caused by industrial agriculture.

Talanoa dialogue

The Paris decision set to convene a "facilitative dialogue" among State Parties in 2018 to take stock of the collective efforts made to progress towards containing global warming within 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to improve commitments at the national level. Based on the Pacific tradition, that dialogue is now named Talanoa, a traditional approach to engage in inclusive and transparent dialogue, with the purpose of sharing experiences and building trust, common understanding to guide decision-making for the collective good. COP23 clarified the features of Talanoa dialogue on climate change, set to take place until COP24 in 2018 and be facilitated jointly by the Fijian and Polish COP24 Presidency. Besides being informed by the latest scientific reports (IPCC on 1.5°C global warming scenario), the Talanoa dialogue offers the opportunity to bring the voices of the poor and affected groups, of vulnerable rural and insular communities, in particular women, to the discussions table in a genuine way. Caritas organisations are ready to take part in this dialogue to bring those voices and advocate for the urgently needed transformational change required to address climate change - the "ecological conversion" called for by the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical – and responsible action at political level.

Human Rights

In a progression from past years, this COP showed an impressive number of events about the human rights implications of climate change. This shows nowadays a strong sense of awareness

and an appetite for political action, also thanks to the championship played by the COP23 Fijian Presidency.

The adoption of the first ever Gender Action Plan is a welcome advancement. The Gender Action Plan foresees activities, with the purpose of developing climate policies, plans and programmes responsive to the specific situation of women. It makes explicit the link between equality, human rights and just transition. How it delivers, however, will be a matter of implementation, for which countries have to make available conspicuous funds.

Making operational of the 'Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform' is a first step towards the recognition of indigenous knowledge. This decision is significant for endorsing principles defined by indigenous peoples' organisations themselves, including the need to stand on equal footing with State Parties.

Financing and transparency

Caritas Internationalis is disappointed that in the first Pacific COP, and in the face of increasing extreme weather events and continuous rising emissions, outcomes on loss and damage and finance show a strong disconnect between the support provided and the reality of climate impacts. We would like to see more commitment in the field of loss and damage. The need to compensate communities and the most vulnerable for the losses they face already from climate related crises must be taken into account in any further negotiations and submissions.

We also acknowledge a human rights perspective not to be neglected by the parties in any future negotiations on mitigation and ambitions: the suffering of those who lose their livelihoods already through climate-related disasters increasingly depend on access to relief services and state support or the support from welfare organisations. At the same time, their dignity as one of the foremost universal human rights is offended day by day by allowing that climate change devastates not only their environment and informal social security networks. Threat-driven migration often combines violent crises over limited resources and other threats, and climate change reinforces such crisis in many ways and many places all over the world. Any action not to be taken for the sake of the Paris Agreement will neglect the opportunity and the right of those who had to leave their homes, to actively care for their own lives in a most dignified way.

Inspired by this vision, Catholic organisations will continue to work together in the future COPs to advance on a shared vision of justice and integral ecology.