

# NDCs *for* Hope

**“I propose that in this Jubilee Year governments undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope”**

Pope Francis - Bull of indiction of the 2025 Jubilee<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, « Hope does not Disappoint », Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025, (Vatican City: Vatican, 9 mai 2024).

This document was produced under the leadership of Musamba Mubanga from Caritas Internationalis, was reviewed by the members of the Caritas Internationalis Climate Justice Working Group for their respective regions - namely, Eugene Ng'andu from Caritas Zambia for Africa; Dr. Haridas V.R., from Caritas India for Asia; Judith Lachnitt from Caritas France for Europe; Sonia Olea from Caritas Spain for Europe; Damiana Lanusse from SELACC for Latin America and the Caribbean; Gina Castillo, from CRS for North America; Tony Sutorius from Caritas Aotearoa New Zealand, representing Oceania; Elizabeth Cronin, from CAFOD; Benjamin Wilson from SCIAF; and Damian Spruce from Caritas Australia for the Integral Human Development Committee - as well as by Lydia Machaka from CIDSE, and was authored by Cécile Stone, OFS, from Caritas Internationalis.

Published by Caritas Internationalis  
June 2025



↑ Flooded rice fields in Patheingyi state, Myanmar

# Table of contents

● <b>Introduction</b>	4
a. Hope in this special year	4
b. We have failed to be ambitious enough	5
i. On Mitigation	
ii. On Adaptation	
iii. On Loss and Damage	
c. Time For Transformative Change: Integral Human Development	6
● <b>Wholesome relationships</b>	7
a. Accountability: Commit to clear targets	7
b. Subsidiarity: Ensure the most affected are heard	8
c. Equity: Seek justice and enable peace	10
● <b>Caring for each other</b>	12
a. Solidarity: With those who have suffered losses and damages	12
b. Including those who are displaced	13
● <b>Caring for our common home</b>	14
a. Agroecology: Agriculture and food systems for thriving people and ecosystems	14
b. Sufficiency: For increased well-being, especially in overly material societies	16
● <b>Conclusion</b>	
To enable transformative NDCs, turn debt into hope	18



# Introduction

## a Hope in this special year

Pope Francis has called for 2025 to be a Jubilee year, a time to heal our relationships with God, with each other and with Creation. A time during which “we are called to be tangible signs of hope” for each other,<sup>2</sup> including in the context of climate change. May governments restore hope for humanity by submitting truly ambitious plans for climate action as the Jubilee year begins.

Indeed, changes in our common home - and particularly in the climate - are rapidly bringing upon humanity untold levels of suffering, in particular to the poorest and most marginalised of our sisters and brothers. As we embark now on preparations for the 30th Conference of Parties (COP30), we have not yet managed to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in a meaningful enough way. Neither have the most vulnerable amongst us been supported to adapt fast enough to the changes, nor have the losses and damages inflicted upon them been seriously addressed.<sup>3</sup>

This coming year is crucial to reversing the trend. Countries are due to submit enhanced Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by early 2025.<sup>4</sup> As the window to keep the Earth’s temperature rise at no more than 1.5°C rapidly closes, revising the NDCs represents a major opportunity, possibly the last, to keep to the commitments made in the Paris Agreement, to each other and to the generations to come, to protect the habitability of our common home.

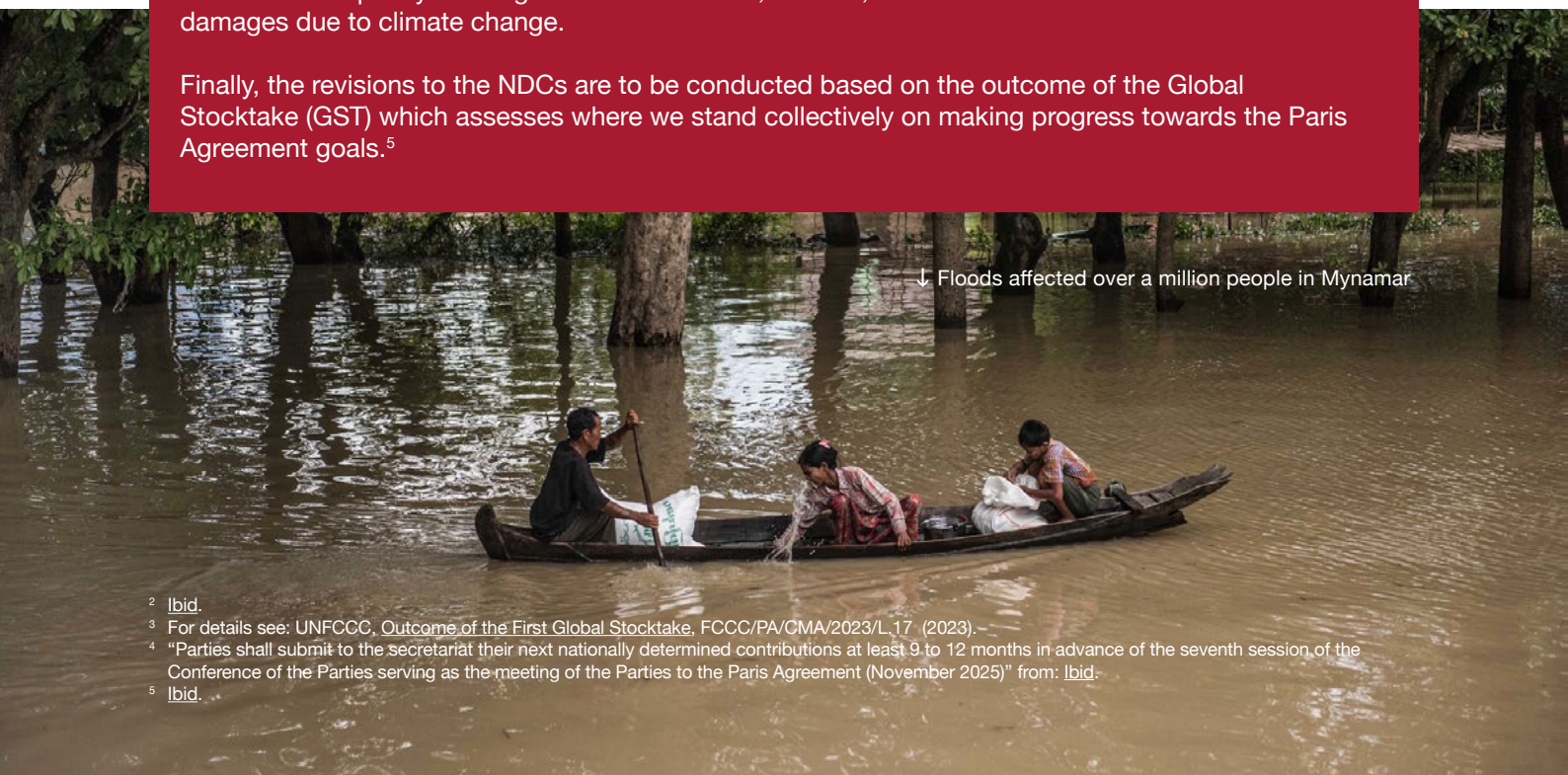
### What are the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?

The NDCs are countries’ pledges to each other and to their citizens on how they plan to tackle the challenges of climate change. Under the Paris Agreement, countries have agreed to develop, and update every five years with greater ambitions, their plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate impacts. The NDCs set targets, define how they will be reached - ideally with a financing plan - and how progress will be monitored.

Critically, the documents contribute to determining national priorities and provide political significance. They play a key role for developing countries to raise political awareness of climate action needs so that the necessary policy changes can take place, and vital finance, technology transfer and capacity building needs can be filled, to avert, minimise and address losses and damages due to climate change.

Finally, the revisions to the NDCs are to be conducted based on the outcome of the Global Stocktake (GST) which assesses where we stand collectively on making progress towards the Paris Agreement goals.<sup>5</sup>

↓ Floods affected over a million people in Myanmar



<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For details see: UNFCCC, Outcome of the First Global Stocktake, FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/L.17 (2023).

<sup>4</sup> “Parties shall submit to the secretariat their next nationally determined contributions at least 9 to 12 months in advance of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (November 2025)” from: Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

## b We have failed to be ambitious enough

The outcome of the first Global Stocktake concluded at COP28 and complementary studies show the need for much more ambitious NDCs on the three pillars of climate action: mitigation, adaptation and loss and damage.<sup>6</sup>

### i. On Mitigation

- The full implementation **of the latest NDCs puts our common climate on a path to an increase of 2.1°C to 2.8°C** by the end of the century,<sup>7</sup> well above the Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to no more than 1.5°C.
- To remain at or below the 1.5°C limit, greenhouse gas emissions...<sup>8</sup>

**...would have to be cut 43% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.**

**-43%**

**Yet, if all of the NDCs submitted so far were to be implemented, we would only be cutting emissions 2% by 2030.**

**-2%**

### ii. On Adaptation

- The Global Stocktake recognises that
  - **gaps exist in the planning, implementation and monitoring** of resilience building action;
  - and that **access to funds is significantly challenging**.
- A concurrent UN study shows that the **finance needs** of developing countries for adaptation are **10 to 18 times greater than international public finance flows** for adaptation.<sup>9</sup>

**Funds needed for adaptation**

● Actual funds

### iii. On Loss and Damage

- The Global Stocktake acknowledges that
  - **significant gaps remain in finance, but also understanding, knowledge, support, policy and action** in responding to the **increasing economic and noneconomic losses and damages**;
  - it also expresses **deep concern regarding the impact of losses and damages on the fiscal space of developing countries and their ability to realise the Sustainable Development Goals**.<sup>10</sup>
- A recent study shows that, just on economic impacts, **we are already locked in to at least 38 trillion dollars of damage every year by 2050** at the present level of warming,<sup>11</sup> yet only 745 million US dollars have been committed to the Loss and Damage Fund.

**Funds needed for Loss & Damage**

● Actual funds

<sup>6,7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> In 2030, relative to 2019 according to: UNFCCC, [Nationally determined contributions under the Paris Agreement](#), FCCC/PA/CMA/2023/12 (2023).

<sup>9</sup> UNEP, « [Underfinanced. Underprepared.](#) », Adaptation Gap Report 2023.

<sup>10</sup> UNFCCC, [Outcome](#), Supra.

<sup>11</sup> Maximilian Kotz et al., « [The Economic Commitment of Climate Change](#) ». Nature 628, no 8008 (18 april 2024): 551-57.

## C Time for transformative change: Integral Human Development

It has become clear the time is no longer for incremental improvements. To put it in the words of Pope Francis, a new process is needed, which is “drastic, intense and count(s) on the commitment of all.”<sup>12</sup> This time around, NDC processes need to aim for transformative change. Climate change can only be fully addressed through deep, system-wide reconfigurations of social, economic, and ecological systems which allow human rights to be fulfilled and set humanity onto a course of shared and holistic human development - which the Catholic Social Teaching calls Integral Human Development.

### What is Integral Human Development (IHD)?

The concept of Integral Human Development (IHD) promoted by the Catholic Church takes a holistic perspective and emphasises the need for all dimensions of the human person – including physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, moral and social - to reach their full potential. It recognizes that every person has a unique contribution to make in the world and that thriving relationships - with God, with other humans and with Creation - are necessary for a person’s dignity to flourish.<sup>13</sup> Caring for the common good - each other and the Earth – are at the core of Integral Human Development.<sup>14</sup>

Integral human development can provide a framework for thinking about how to update the NDCs so that they are effective and ensure the human rights of all - including of future generations - are realized.

### Principles of Integral Human Development for Renewed NDCs



Based on a review of existing literature, this document will outline the relevance of each of these principles, assess how well they were followed in the last edition of the NDCs, and present the Caritas confederation’s recommendations for the upcoming NDCs.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis, « *Laudate Deum* », Apostolic Exhortation, (Vatican, 4 October 2023), §59.

<sup>13</sup> Pope Francis, « *Laudato Si'* », Encyclical Letter, (Vatican, 24 mai 2015).

<sup>14</sup> Caritas Internationalis, CRS, SCIAF and Caritas Australia, « *Unheard, Uncharted: A holistic vision for addressing “non-economic” loss and damage* », 2023.

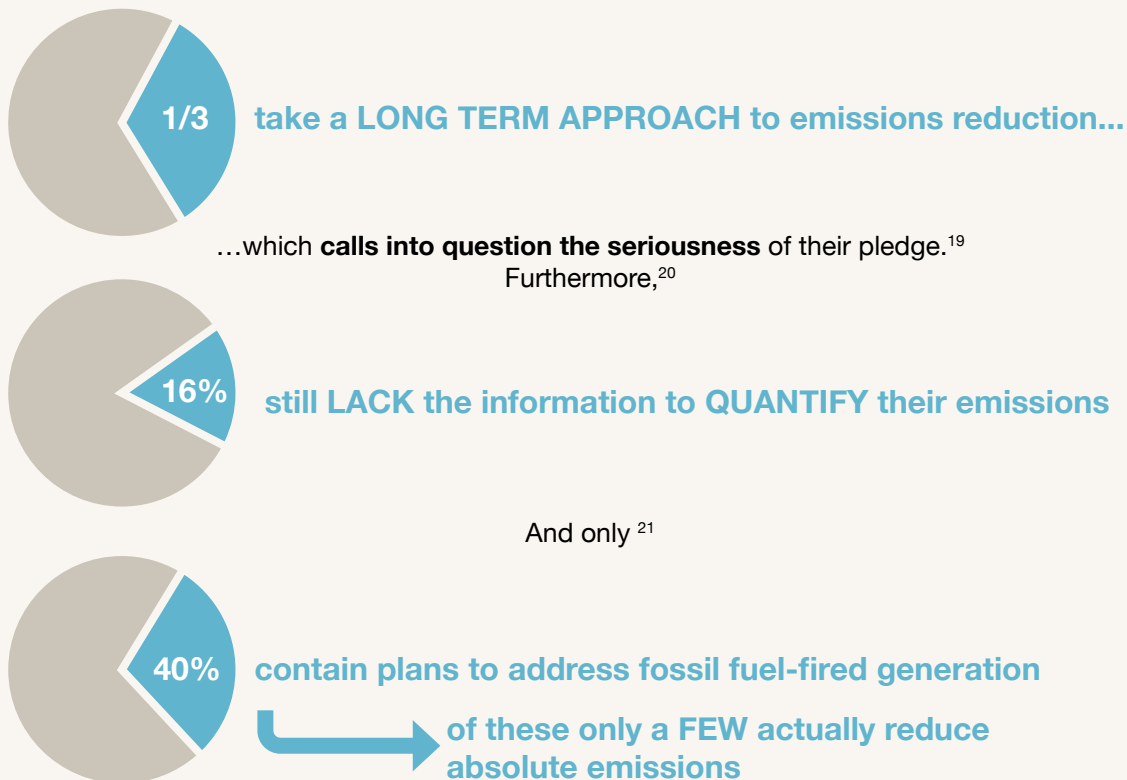
# Wholesome relationships

## a Accountability: Commit to clear targets

The success of the NDC process, especially in a context where radical cuts in collective emissions are needed, relies on countries holding themselves accountable to each other and to future generations with clear targets. The new plans that will be provided in the updated NDCs must nearly halve global emissions in the space of five years. Even though the growth rate of total emissions is slowing down, and global emissions from land use change are timidly receding, global fossil fuel emissions, which account for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions, still continue to rise.<sup>15,16</sup> Yet fossil fuel use must be rapidly and drastically reduced to stay within the 1.5°C limit.

### The last round of NDCs...

...included more emissions reductions targets, but their net impact would **only be a 2% reduction in emissions by 2030**<sup>17</sup>, when 43% is needed.<sup>18</sup> Surprisingly, of the 90 countries which have made **net-zero pledge** targets by 2050 outside of the NDC process **only**



As they update their NDCs, in the words of Pope Francis, national governments must plan for “*binding forms of energy transition that meet three conditions: that they be efficient, obligatory and readily monitored.*”<sup>202</sup> They must set clear greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, for energy supply and for each sector of the economy. These targets must actually correspond to the pace and scale needed to keep global warming to no more than 1.5°C in accordance with the Paris Agreement.

<sup>15</sup> United Nations. « *Causes and Effects of Climate Change* ». Consulted 13 February 2025.

<sup>16</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change: Working Group III Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>17</sup> Relative to 2019.

<sup>18</sup> WRI, « *The State of Nationally Determined Contributions: 2022* », 2022.

<sup>19, 20, 21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Pope Francis, « *Laudate Deum* », Apostolic Exhortation, (Vatican, 4 October 2023), §59.

## **b** Subsidiarity: Ensure the most affected are heard

The causes and consequences of climate change are highly complex, multisectoral and involve all segments of society. Equitable and effective solutions to averting, minimising and addressing losses and damages due to climate change necessarily involve many stakeholders and sectors. Therefore, only by listening to the voices of all stakeholders can such solutions be found.

The process of revising the NDCs has the potential to do just that, however, so far, it has not proven to be sufficiently inclusive, despite the UNFCCC's encouragement to take a multistakeholder approach to the NDCs. While the poor and marginalised are disproportionately affected by climate change, they hardly have had a say in the process.<sup>23</sup> This needs to change.

Societies must find, in the words of Pope Francis, “a new way of making progress together”<sup>24</sup> and apply the principle of subsidiarity. This core principle of Catholic Social Teaching recognizes that all people are entitled to be actively involved in decisions that impact their lives and requires that decisions are made by those most affected by the community's challenges.

NDCs must be revised with the full participation of members of the communities most vulnerable to climate change and most affected by its impacts, as well as with the participation of the civil society organisations at their side. This is the only way to guarantee the relevance and effectiveness of the plans, the fair sharing of burdens they may imply, and their acceptance and adoption.

### The last NDCs...

...were **primarily based on consultations with stakeholders from government ministries** according to the UNFCCC...<sup>25</sup>

...and another study found that, in a sample of 11 NDCs, **communities and community-based organisations were excluded from all but one.**<sup>26</sup>

In a global context of shrinking civic space,<sup>27</sup> governments must make sure the voices of the people most affected by climate change, and by the policies designed to address climate change, are heard and their needs are taken into account in the process of updating the NDCs. They must:

- guarantee participatory and inclusive NDC revision processes;
- ensure local and traditional values, knowledge and cultures are respected and protected;
- give priority to people in vulnerable situations (such as children, elderly, people with disabilities, migrants and refugees)

<sup>23</sup> OXFAM, « *Climate Plans for the People* », 2024.

<sup>24</sup> Pope Francis, « *Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28)* ». (Vatican, 2 December 2023).

<sup>25</sup> UNFCCC, « *First report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement* », Standing Committee on Finance, 2021, 15.

<sup>26</sup> OXFAM, « *Climate Plans* », Supra.

<sup>27</sup> OHCHR, « *OHCHR and Protecting and Expanding Civic Space*. » Accessed February 13, 2025.





↑ Displaced families near Bilel, Darfur receive support from ACT-Caritas, including tools, schooling and health care.

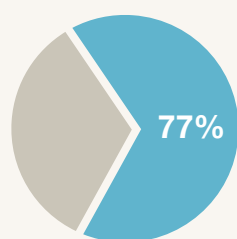
## C

## Equity: Seek justice and enable peace

*“There are not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but a single and complex socio-environmental crisis. The possibilities for solutions require an integrated approach to combat poverty, restore dignity to the excluded, and simultaneously preserve nature.”*<sup>28</sup> These words from Pope Francis remind us that it is urgent to bring together ecological and social imperatives. Updating the NDCs with a holistic approach represents an opportunity to ensure no one is excluded and give a renewed sense of hope to all people.

Greenhouse gas emissions per capita are highly unequal. Not only are there wide discrepancies between countries, with some bearing a much heavier responsibility for emissions - including historical - but also, the consumption patterns of world's wealthiest people make them responsible for the greatest share of global emissions.

### Emissions of the G20 account for...<sup>29</sup>

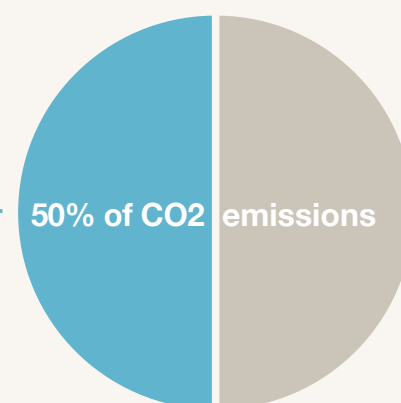


of Global emissions, both present and historical...

...and the consumption of the top 10% wealthiest people...<sup>30</sup>



is responsible for



50% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

Further exacerbating inequality, poor and vulnerable populations are the first victims of the impacts due to changes in our common climate. Confronted with structural inequalities and limited political and economic resources, these groups have the least capacity to adapt, are the least likely to benefit from adaptation investments and have the most difficulty coping with losses and damages.

The transition to low carbon and resilient societies must not only be effective, but must also imperatively **be just**. The heaviest emitters must set an example by assuming responsibility for their disproportionate share of emissions. Additionally, the negative impacts of the necessary radical shifts must be minimised and their benefits fairly distributed. Not only is this imperative for ethical reasons. Evidence also shows that higher attention to well-being and equality within countries is linked to lower emissions.<sup>31</sup> It is also the only way to ensure public and political support for a decisive acceleration of the transition.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Pope Francis, « *Laudato Si'* », Supra..

<sup>29</sup> Without including the African Union. See: UNEP, “No More Hot Air... Please!”, Emissions Gap Report 2024,10.

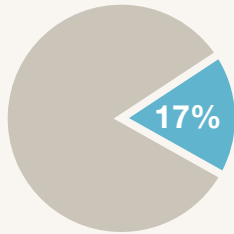
<sup>30</sup> OXFAM. “Climate Equality: A Planet for the 99%.” 2023.

<sup>31</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change 2022*, 254.

<sup>32</sup> IPCC, ed. “Summary for Policymakers.” In *Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change*, 3–48, (Cambridge University Press, 2023).



### Of the previous NDCs only...<sup>33</sup>



dedicated a section to the notion of a “just transition”

In the process of updating NDCs, Caritas Internationalis therefore calls on national governments to *pay more attention to equity, through*

- targets for cuts in greenhouse gas emissions which are proportional to historical responsibility for global greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the Paris Agreement’s “Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capabilities” (CBDR-RC) principle;
- progressive fiscal and pricing policies which begin to address underlying inequalities;
- and by anticipating and addressing the distributional and human rights implications of the transition
  - on jobs and incomes
    - > with the creation of, and enabling the access to, decent and sustainable livelihood options,
    - > and by ensuring access to social protection systems;
  - on access to goods, transportation and energy and to adaptation measures;
  - on Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities and the use of land and natural resources

<sup>33</sup> WRI, « The State of Nationally Determined Contributions: 2022 ».



↓ Drought in Ethiopia has left fields barren and crops failed.  
Photo: Joshua Smith/Caritas Switzerland

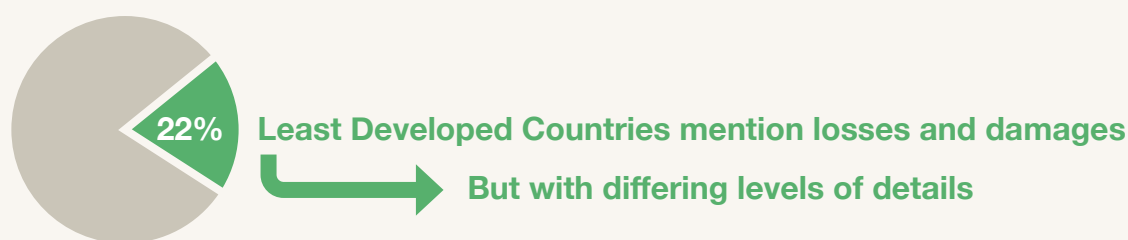
# Caring for each other

## **a** Solidarity: with those who have suffered losses and damages...

Great losses and damages have already been incurred due to insufficient mitigation and adaptation efforts. More are to come. Present assessments of the phenomenon are generally vast underestimates. They barely account for indirect impacts and for the innumerable non economic losses and damages. The cost of some such losses is infinite and simply unacceptable, such as when lives, indigenous cultures or species are lost.

Governments are presently unprepared for dealing with losses and damages.<sup>34</sup> In the near absence of restorative justice mechanisms, households and governments of countries vulnerable to climate change have been shouldering these impacts on their own. Often this traps them into a debt spiral.

**Despite the magnitude of losses and damages and the complexity in addressing them, in their last NDCs only<sup>35</sup>**



And only a handful of NDCs address **non-economic** losses and damages.<sup>36</sup>

In their revised NDCs, governments must therefore address the “need for urgent and enhanced action and support for addressing loss and damage” recognized in the Global Stocktake and:<sup>37</sup>

- identify the losses and damages experienced, taking a comprehensive and holistic approach so as to encompass indirect, as well as non economic, losses and damages;
- assess the multidimensional risks of, and vulnerabilities to, losses and damages;<sup>38</sup>
- make plans to prepare for, cope with and recover from losses and damages
  - based on the principle of subsidiarity;<sup>39</sup>
  - and with the legal, policy and institutional frameworks necessary to their implementation;
- identify financial, technological and capacity needs, as well as sources to fill them predictably and sustainably.<sup>40,41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Caritas Internationalis. “Integral Human Development: A Holistic Approach to Restoring Dignity.” 2024.

<sup>35</sup> IIED, *Harnessing Nationally Determined Contributions to Tackle Loss and Damage in Least Developed Countries*, (London: International Institute for Environment and Development, 2022).

<sup>36</sup> UNEP, « *Underfinanced. Underprepared* », Supra..

<sup>37</sup> UNFCCC, *Outcome*, Supra.

<sup>38</sup> Caritas Internationalis, CRS, SCIAF and Caritas Australia, « *Unheard. Uncharted: A holistic vision for addressing “non-economic” loss and damage* », 2023.

<sup>39</sup> “Subsidiarity” means that the central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more local level. See: Caritas Internationalis. “*Integral Human Development*”, Supra.

<sup>40</sup> Malawi University of Climate and Earth Sciences. *Research on Economic and Non-Economic Loss and Damage*. Trocaire, 2023

<sup>41</sup> IIED, *Harnessing Nationally Determined Contributions*, Supra.

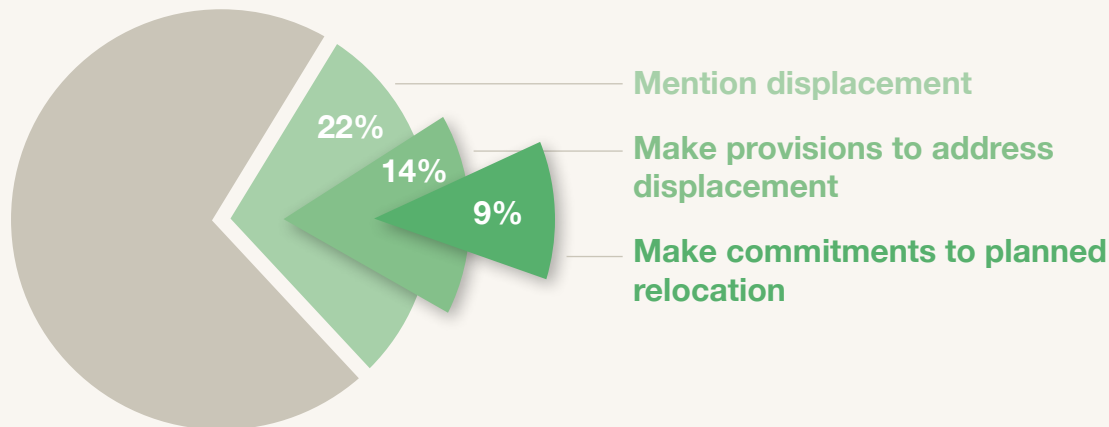


## b

## ...including those who are displaced

A recent study by Caritas Internationalis points to the urgency of addressing the situation of people on the move due to climate change.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, Caritas National Member Organisations have been witnessing and doing their best to address the immense suffering, human rights violations and associated losses and damages they face at all stages of their displacement for lack of protection and support. Further, all displaced people, including for reasons other than climate change, are particularly vulnerable to climate hazards. In response, the study points to the need to integrate the issue of displacement in the NDCs.

Despite acute needs, of the last batch of NDCs, many refer to mobility as a risk, challenge or problem. Few refer to enabling proactive migration in order to minimise losses and damages:<sup>43,44</sup>  
And only



The NDCs must include:

- enabling proactive migration that is safe, regular and orderly, as well as community-centred planned relocation, where mitigation and adaptation efforts are reaching their limits and people would rather move;
- planning and implementation processes for durable solutions which value traditional approaches and are more inclusive of, and centred on, the needs of people, both on the move and their host communities;
- adapting and increasing social and physical infrastructure capacity to holistically address present and future needs generated by displacement due to climate change;
- planning for policy and legal frameworks to better protect and support people displaced by climate change;<sup>45</sup>
- and improved data collection and analysis of displacement due to climate change.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Caritas Internationalis, "Displaced by a Changing Climate - Caritas Voices: Protecting and Supporting People on the Move." (Vatican City: Caritas Internationalis, 2023).

<sup>43</sup> OECD, "Addressing Forced Displacement in Climate Change Adaptation - No Longer a Blind Spot." Oecd Development Policy Papers, 2023.

<sup>44</sup> Dennis Mombauer et al. "Addressing Climate-Related Human Mobility through NDCs and NAPs: State of Play, Good Practices, and the Ways Forward." Frontiers in Climate 5 (March 14, 2023): 1125936.

<sup>45</sup> Caritas Internationalis, "Integral Human Development", Supra.

<sup>46</sup> Caritas Internationalis, "Displaced by a Changing Climate", Supra.

# Caring for our common home

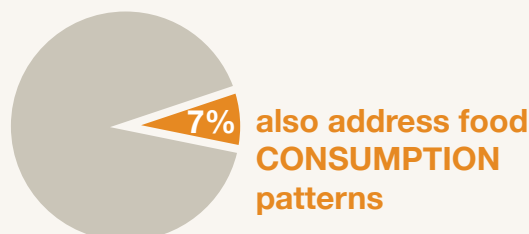
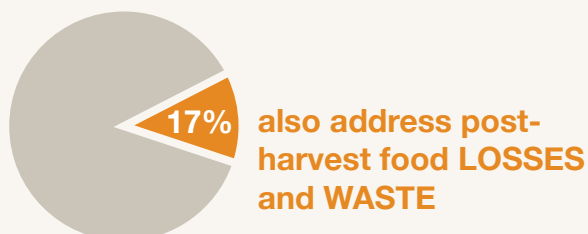
## a Agroecology: Agriculture and Food Systems for Thriving People and Ecosystems

Transforming agriculture and food systems is critical to curbing greenhouse gas emissions and to increasing resilience to climate change. The emissions from agriculture and food systems alone - including their impact on land use - are enough to drive our common home beyond the threshold of 1.5°C within the coming decades, even if fossil fuel emissions were stopped immediately.<sup>47</sup> Further, climate change effects on agriculture, forestry and fisheries make meeting basic human needs, and ensuring food security, increasingly difficult, and adaptation measures implemented so far are insufficient.<sup>48</sup>

Shifting to an agroecological approach to agriculture and food systems has the potential to improve food security,<sup>49,50</sup> as well as to restore it when it has been damaged by climate impacts, and to increase carbon sequestration as well as the resilience of livelihoods to climate change.<sup>51</sup> This holistic and integrated approach - as defined by the FAO - applies ecological and social concepts to the design and management of agriculture and food systems and promotes and restores the health of ecosystems.<sup>52</sup>

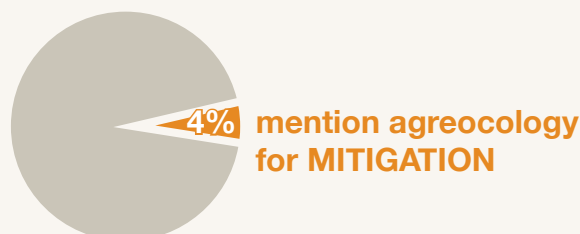
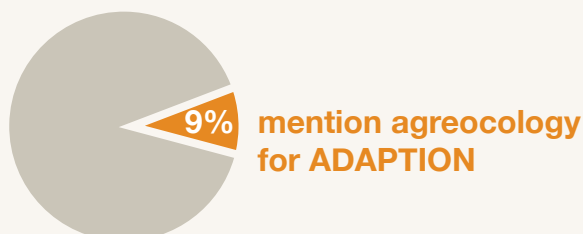
### Of the last NDCs:

**Most addressed agriculture, but only...**<sup>53</sup>



**Most mention the need to increase the resilience of agriculture and food systems, but...**  
**FEW** include concrete targets, measures and actions to meet this need<sup>54</sup>

**And, on agroecology, only...**<sup>55</sup>



<sup>47</sup> Clark, Michael A. et al., "Global Food System Emissions Could Preclude Achieving the 1.5° and 2°C Climate Change Targets." *Science* 370, no. 6517 (November 6, 2020): 705–8.

<sup>48</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change 2022 – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*: Working Group II Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

<sup>49</sup> Rachel Bezner Kerr et al., "Can Agroecology Improve Food Security and Nutrition? A Review." *Global Food Security* 29 (June 2021): 100540.

<sup>50</sup> HLPE, "Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches for Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems That Enhance Food Security and Nutrition," A Report by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, (Rome, 2019).

<sup>51</sup> IPCC, "Climate Change 2023 - Synthesis Report." A Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023.

<sup>52</sup> FAO, "Overview - What Is Agroecology?" Agroecology Knowledge Hub. Accessed February 13, 2025.

<sup>53</sup> WWF and Climate Focus, "Food Forward NDCs: An Assessment of Updated NDCs for Food Systems Transformation," 2024.

<sup>54</sup> Global Alliance for the Future of Food, "Untapped Opportunities for Climate Action: An Assessment of Food Systems in Nationally Determined Contributions," 2022.

<sup>55</sup> Kyle Dittmer et al., "Agroecology Can Promote Climate Change Adaptation Outcomes Without Compromising Yield In Smallholder Systems." *Environmental Management* 72, no. 2 (August 2023): 333–42.



↑ Malis Justin, 30, grows okra in BidiBidi camp with Caritas support, earning income to help feed and clothe his children.  
Photo: Tommy Trenchard for Caritas

Countries must follow through on the declaration they made at COP28 on agriculture and food systems<sup>56</sup> and *promote a transition towards food systems based on agroecological principles when revising the NDCs*.<sup>57,58</sup> This includes:

- designing locally-led and context-specific approaches and strategies for transforming food systems together with stakeholders, including small-holder farmers, fisherfolk and Indigenous Peoples;
- removing subsidies from fossil fuel- and chemical-intensive food systems and redirecting finance to agroecological approaches;
- designing policies to encourage a full shift to the adoption of agroecological production principles, such as diversification, soil and water conservation, agroforestry and seed sovereignty;
- reducing energy consumption, and shifting to renewable energy, for production, storage, processing and transportation;
- reducing and repurposing food loss and waste;
- designing policies to ensure just food environments - including in public institutions - that support:
  - equitable access to, and consumption of, food which is produced locally, adapted to local ecosystems and minimally processed,
  - as well as plant-rich diets, which decrease the need for land under cultivation and the pressure on natural ecosystems such as forests.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> “COP28 UAE Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action,” 2023.

<sup>57</sup> HLPE, “Agroecological and Other Innovative Approaches,” Supra.

<sup>58</sup> FAO, “Overview - The 10 elements of Agroecology,” Agroecology Knowledge Hub. Accessed February 13, 2025.

<sup>59</sup> COP28 Presidency et al. “COP28 Agriculture, Food and Climate National Action Toolkit - Taking Stock of Good Practices, Initiatives, and Tools for Food System Transformation through Nationally Determined Contributions and National Adaptation Plans,” 2023.

## b Sufficiency: for increased well-being, especially in overly material societies

While the technological solutions presently favoured by policy-makers and investors - increasing energy efficiency and switching to renewable sources of energy - have an important role to play, so does promoting, and enabling, lifestyle options less dependent on fossil fuels.<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, based on the assumption people have an insatiable desire for material goods modern age economies are fully oriented towards growing their GDP. To date, despite some regional improvements, global GDP oriented growth has been coupled with a global growth in greenhouse gas emissions. Decades-long efforts to reduce energy intensity have been outpaced by the growth in demand for energy linked to global GDP growth.<sup>61</sup>

The process of updating the NDCs provides societies with the opportunity to move on from an exclusive focus on GDP growth. Instead, their focus can shift towards enabling the development of each person in all of his or her dimensions - beyond material, and including relational - as proposed by the concept of Integral Human Development. While many countries and socio-economic groups clearly need access to more (renewable) energy and resources, others would gain from a shift to an economy where sufficiency is valued and promoted.<sup>62</sup> Past a certain level, greater material consumption is not linked with an improvement in well-being.<sup>63</sup> A shift to lower carbon footprints is even associated with higher life satisfaction,<sup>64</sup> and is compatible with improving basic well-being for all.<sup>65</sup>

Of the past NDCs, much of the emphasis is on technological solutions:<sup>66</sup>



As they update their NDCs, Caritas Internationalis therefore calls on national governments to *focus not only on technological solutions, but also on ambitious sufficiency policies*.

- on the supply-side, including:
  - in the transportation sector, developing access to walking, cycling, shared pooled and public transportation, and increasing access to local jobs, services and locally produced goods;
  - in the industrial sector, increasing the circularity of material flows and decreasing extractivism;
  - in the buildings sector, increasing retrofits such as insulation;
  - and phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies;
- on the demand-side, by encouraging low-greenhouse gas intensive choices at all levels of society - individuals, businesses, government bodies, etc. - such as: shifting to plant-based diets, living car-free and reducing air travel, consuming longer-lived repairable products, or more frugal heating and cooling temperature settings.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Pope Francis. "Address of His Holiness" Supra..

<sup>61</sup> IPCC, "Emissions Trends and Drivers," In Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change, 245–94, Cambridge University Press, 2023.

<sup>62</sup> "Sufficiency policies are a set of measures and daily practices that avoid demand for energy, materials, land and water while delivering human well-being for all within planetary boundaries." From: IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*. Summary for Policymakers, 2022.

<sup>63</sup> A number of studies show this. See for example: Tim Kasser Tim. *The High Price of Materialism*. S.I.: MIT Press, 2003.

<sup>64</sup> Gibran Vita et al. "Happier with Less? Members of European Environmental Grassroots Initiatives Reconcile Lower Carbon Footprints with Higher Life Satisfaction and Income Increases." *Energy Research & Social Science* 60 (February 2020): 101329.

<sup>65</sup> IPCC, "Demand, Services and Social Aspects of Mitigation," In Climate Change 2022 - Mitigation of Climate Change, 503–612. (Cambridge University Press, 2023), 505.

<sup>66</sup> WRI, « *The State of Nationally Determined Contributions: 2022* ». Supra.

<sup>67</sup> IPCC, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*, Technical Summary. Geneva: IPCC, 2022.







# Conclusion:

## To enable transformative NDCs, Turn Debt into Hope

Our common climate is on track to warming well above the Paris Agreement goal of 1.5°C. Even if radical mitigation measures enable humanity to reach this goal, residual risks will persist for many years and people will suffer losses and damages. Moreover, numerous initiatives are already underway, to avert, minimise and address losses and damages to individuals and communities. Unfortunately, the rate and scale of these actions, as determined by the last edition of the NDCs, are being far outpaced as destructive climate events multiply and intensify.

This underscores the importance of seizing the opportunity of updating the NDCs to bring about the transformative changes needed to truly address climate change and allow humanity to thrive - today and tomorrow - leaving no one behind. Integral Human Development, based on the belief that people are inherently social,<sup>68</sup> promotes wholesome relationships as well as caring for each other and for the Earth. Updating the NDCs with accountability, subsidiarity, equity, solidarity, agroecology and sufficiency as guiding principles can foster the new sense of hope called for in the Jubilee year.

However, for this hope to be well-founded, the renewed NDCs will need to be accompanied by an equally renewed commitment to global justice to ensure these plans are fully implemented. Many of the countries least responsible for climate change, yet most vulnerable and affected by it, are poor and face increasing difficulties financing basic services for their populations, further compounded by new cuts in foreign aid. Despite the vital necessity of implementing ambitious NDCs, this will remain a challenge for many countries unless their debt servicing difficulties, compounded by rising interest rates, are addressed.

Countries of the global North have an “ecological” debt towards countries from the global South. Pope Francis has called for this Jubilee year 2025 to be the year when affluent nations “acknowledge the gravity of so many of their past decisions and determine to forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them”.<sup>69</sup> Restructuring the global financial architecture and relieving foreign debt is essential to implementing transformative NDCs which protect people’s dignity and their human rights, today and tomorrow, and give hope.

<sup>68</sup> Caritas Internationalis, « Unheard, Uncharted », Supra..

<sup>69</sup> Pope Francis, « Hope does not Disappoint », Supra..



↑ A young person walks past micro basins in Ethiopia's Jijiga Zone. Local people trap moisture and protect the soil for farming in partnership with CI.  
Photo: David Snyder/Caritas



↓ Child plays with a kite made from plastic bags in Kutubalong camp near Cox's Bazar. Rohingya refugee crisis, Bangladesh.



↓↑ Picture description to go here



Palazzo San Calisto, V-00120,  
Vatican City State  
+39 06 698 797 99

©2025 by Caritas Internationalis