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COP26 ECUMENICAL PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS - END OF SUMMIT

Following two intense weeks of negotiations, civil society action, discussion and prayer, COP26 concluded mid-November. ACT Alliance, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the World Council of Churches (WCC) and their members followed the summit closely. We feel that there is still a lot that must be done to achieve climate justice, particularly for communities in the Global South. They face the worst effects of climate change and have done the least to contribute to it.

As people of faith, committed to care for creation and work for climate justice and the dignity of all, we are disappointed by the results from COP26 in Glasgow. What has been negotiated does not go far enough in offering solid solutions to the climate crisis. The outcome shows the long and strenuous journey we have ahead of us to overcome lingering economic and political interests within the multilateral system. We stand in solidarity with vulnerable communities that increasingly suffer from climate change, yet COP decision-making struggles to come to terms with the reality that without details and actions, promises are empty.

As people of faith, we are disappointed but not disheartened by the lack of concrete results from COP26. As partners in the ecumenical movement, we will continue to care for creation, work for climate justice, and stand with the most vulnerable. We call on churches worldwide to keep raising their voices for creation and for climate justice.

Fossil fuel transition

The necessary exit from coal production and use was mentioned for the first time at a COP, but only in a vague way. China and some other governments – primarily developed or newly industrialized countries – opposed ambitions to rapidly reduce coal emissions. They were strongly supported in this by fossil fuel industry lobbyists. However, significant initiatives were launched outside the negotiating rooms.

In particular, we point to the launch of the Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance (BOGA), an initiative led by Costa Rica and Denmark in collaboration with France, Greenland, Ireland, Quebec, Sweden and Wales. Its members recognize that phasing out fossil fuels is an urgent part of tackling the climate emergency. Instead of just mentioning the need to stop subsidies for fossil fuel, as at previous COPs, it addresses one of the major root causes of climate change.

“BOGA is a great step forward in the work to phase out oil and gas,” said Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, ACT Alliance General Secretary. “We look forward to seeing the actions taken by the members of the Alliance in achieving this goal, and also in seeing other nations join in this key commitment.”



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Some countries' economies, such as South Africa's, rely heavily on coal mining. Another side initiative by several European countries will help South Africa with adaptation and financially support its economy's transition. This is crucial for South Africa's acceptance of a fossil-free future.

The initiative of several countries to reduce emissions from methane points is in the same direction: towards a fossil-free energy future.

Global warming

The final text of COP26 expresses alarm and "utmost concern" that human activities have caused 1.1°C of global warming to date. This is a concern we fully share. The targets for reducing emissions by 2030 remain inadequate and are on a trajectory to reach 2.4°C.

The world urgently needs more ambition and more concerted action to achieve climate justice and keep global warming at 1.5°C or below. "To 'Keep 1.5 Alive', the world must phase out fossil fuel production and consumption as fast as possible - and not just subsidies as has been made prominent in Glasgow," says Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, ACT Alliance General Secretary.

"Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C is vital in order to lessen the eventual impacts of climate change on the poorest and most vulnerable people in the world, particularly women and girls in all their diversity who are the most affected by climate-induced disasters," said Rudelmar Bueno de Faria.

With the political unwillingness shown during COP26 negotiations by countries that are major emitters, it will be difficult to avoid the even more catastrophic effects of climate change. This will destroy the lives and livelihoods of millions of the most vulnerable and marginalized people. In order to counteract such severe consequences and save lives, the G7 and G20 should lead the revisiting of national emission reduction targets to align with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement by 2022.

"World leaders must stop ignoring the climate crisis and act to bring forward significant emission reduction targets in 2022 to avoid the catastrophic effects of climate change," said Elena Cedillo, the LWF Program Executive for Climate Justice.

Youth demand more space

Youth voices are calling for more ambitious emission targets to keep 1.5°C alive. Youth activists took to the streets of Glasgow to demand world leaders do their job. Youth also demand more space at the negotiating and decision-making tables for structurally marginalized leaders - including youth leaders.

"Youth are now and will continue to be disproportionately affected by climate change in the coming decades, and implore world leaders to stop selling off their future," said Savanna



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Sullivan, the LWF Program Executive for Youth. “We are deeply concerned about the Glasgow result. In spite of some progress, we are still far from solving the climate crisis, and we will need a drastic increase in the ambition of all parties.”

Interfaith action on climate change

Climate change is a global threat that affects people of all faiths. At the beginning of COP26 an interfaith Talanoa Dialogue was held in Glasgow to underline the moral obligation to act and how it unites people of all faiths. Out of this dialogue emerged [a call to COP26](#) that highlighted the important subjects that must be addressed to achieve climate justice.

“If the goal to stay below 1.5 degrees is to be reached, all parts of the global society should be included. The Glasgow Climate Pact mentions the importance of collaborations with civil society and many groups but not faith groups,” said Rev. Henrik Grape, coordinator of the WCC working group on Climate Change. “People of faith play a much bigger part in the aspirations to fight for climate justice and need to be included in the global discussions to move forward.”

Listening to Indigenous voices

Bringing forward Indigenous perspectives on climate change and biodiversity was central to interfaith action at COP26. The side event [Making Peace with Nature: Heeding the Call of Indigenous Peoples](#) featured new coalitions of religious and Indigenous leaders from diverse traditions coming together to protect nature and the climate.

One panelist was Anglican Archbishop Mark MacDonald, President of WCC for North America. “An estimated 80 per cent of the biodiversity on this planet is under the oversight, the protocols, the life of Indigenous peoples. The rights, the life of Indigenous people is so intimate to the future of the planet that there is no livable future for this planet that does not address the rights of Indigenous peoples,” he said. “The wisdom that we will need, the way of life that we will need in order to have a livable planet is also found in Indigenous life and Indigenous philosophy. Indigenous people and their life stand in a prophetic relationship with humanity’s future.” In conclusion, Archbishop MacDonald urged that we listen to and understand Indigenous voices, “for in this we will find life.”

Loss and Damage

Finance for Loss and Damage was one of the key requests of the majority of countries at COP26. There were calls from vulnerable and marginalized communities from the Global South to recognize the urgent need for huge and timely financial support to those suffering the most from ever-increasing Loss and Damage. The calls for adequate funding and functional instruments for financial and technical support and capacity building were stronger than ever.

“We have witnessed a strong show of solidarity from some developed nations for vulnerable nations that experience loss and damage. Scotland pledged 2 million pounds for loss and

damage, inviting other countries to join them in financing to offset the growing impacts of the climate crisis,” said Julius Mbatia.

For the first time, Loss and Damage became part of an important, negotiated document called a cover decision. This is a definite sign of progress, although much remains to be done. Despite the political momentum building towards COP and maintained by developing countries in Glasgow, polluter countries still shied away from shouldering full responsibility for Loss and Damage. They derailed progress. The outcome failed to settle the ever crucial subject of providing finance for Loss and Damage to people who need it most.

“The very poor in some of the most vulnerable countries have been negatively affected by climate change for years. Climate change for many is an issue of life or death,” said Savanna Sullivan. “Their concerns and appeals to the international community were voiced again and again during these two weeks by governments from the most vulnerable and poor countries and by civil society and faith-based organizations. But they were less interesting for some countries than their own national and economic interests and the voices of fossil fuel industry lobbyists who were there in Glasgow.”

“Climate justice is our slogan. Polluters pay,” said Mattias Söderberg, Chief Advisor at DanChurchAid. “Those that are affected right now need help. There is a moral need to support those affected.”

It is a small positive achievement that the Santiago network was amended with a technical assistance facility [VI. 42]¹, and that funding was committed to this facility, a good starting point. We call on governmental, intergovernmental and private actors to quickly add to the pledges that were made.

“The Santiago Network on Loss and Damage will be crucial in strengthening the technical capacity of Global South governments to bear the shocks of climate change,” said Patricia Roy Akullo of DanChurchAid Uganda. “However, we believe that technical capacity must be complemented by actual provision of new and additional loss and damage finance to implement interventions that tackle impacts on vulnerable communities,” adds Julius Mbatia

We welcome the emphasis on a bottom-up approach to loss and damage finances. We note the document acknowledges the important role of a broad range of stakeholders in averting, minimizing and addressing loss and damage due to the adverse effects of climate change. We hope that stakeholder engagement shall deliver approaches and interventions that help Global South countries and communities rise above loss and damage impacts.

Adaptation

We see it as positive that the need for urgent, scaled-up adaptation financing is rigorously stated in paragraph 18 (-/CMA.3_auv2) of the Glasgow Climate Pact with adaptation finance doubled. However, we are concerned that simply doubling adaptation finance by 2025 may not be enough to meet developing countries’ needs.

We also note there is no mention of gender or locally-led adaptation in this section.



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“With concern, we also note that the last point emphasizes leveraging finances from the private sector. This opens the door to possibly meeting the increased adaptation goal through loans,” said Fredrick Njehu, Christian Aid Senior Climate Change and Energy Advisor for Africa. “This will increase the debt load of countries already struggling to manage the negative effects of structural adjustment programs and illegitimate debt.”

It is imperative that profit does not curtail nor delay the need to urgently provide adaptive capacity to support communities disenfranchised by climate impacts.

Climate Finance

In the final report, the Presidency “notes with deep regret” that the goal of developed countries to “mobilize jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020” has not yet been met. It is more than disappointing that finance urgently needed now is yet to be mobilized and made available.

We note the importance of the USD 100 billion report that will be prepared to hold developed countries accountable on delivering the USD 100 billion pledge.

We are pleased to see it mentioned at several points that finances should be made locally accessible for vulnerable populations. These financial resources must be adequate and be delivered without delay, enabling communities to face the climate crisis.

COP26 set into motion a process to set a new finance goal in 2025. While we welcome this and note the inclusion of stakeholder input into the process, we desire a new goal that takes into consideration the entirety of the needs of vulnerable countries including loss and damage.

“We need new and additional funding for climate interventions. This is not charity. This is a matter of justice. It is fundamental in driving adaptation, tackling loss and damage and enabling a just transition to carbon-neutral economies,” said Julius Mbatia, ACT Alliance Climate Justice Manager.

Gender

We welcome the inclusion of the importance of gender-responsive climate finance in [Article 13](#), Gender and Climate Change. It is one of the important achievements in regards to climate finance alongside progress on the role of gender focal points.

Yet “gender mainstreaming cannot be a tick box exercise,” said Margareta Koltai of Act Church of Sweden. Gender-responsive analysis, budgets and actions must be included throughout all COP26 outcomes and implementation. This also means having strong human rights language and a rights-based approach to all COP26 related processes.



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Ambition on gender equality, as well as human rights and Indigenous rights, should be as much a part of climate ambition as other aspects of the negotiations. There needs to be improvement on the inclusion of the voices of the most impacted - women, Indigenous people, people with disabilities - in all aspects and at all levels of the global climate change response.

ACT Alliance

ACT Alliance is a global Protestant and Orthodox faith-based coalition organised in national and regional forums operating in more than 120 countries. Through its more than 140 members, ACT Alliance works on climate justice, humanitarian aid, gender justice, migration and displacement, and peace and security to support local communities.

ACT Alliance's goal is to promote a locally-led and coordinated approach to advocacy, humanitarian and developmental issues.

LWF

The Lutheran World Federation is a global communion of 148 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 77.8 million Christians in 99 countries. As a communion, LWF advocates for the human rights and dignity of all. At COP26, LWF has focused on strengthening climate action and advocacy at all levels. Young people are vital agents of change and formed the greater part of the LWF's delegation to COP26.

WCC

The WCC brings together churches, denominations and church fellowships in more than 120 countries and territories throughout the world, representing over 580 million Christians and including most of the world's Orthodox churches, scores of Anglican, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist and Reformed churches, as well as many United and Independent churches. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today most member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East and the Pacific. There are now 349 member churches.