

# **Zambia Faith Earth Keepers Communique on Climate Justice**

9 May 2024

Nomad's Court Lodge, Lusaka, Zambia

We, members of faith communities from across Zambia, gathered in Lusaka, Zambia, from 7-9 May 2024, to explore embracing faith in climate action.

In the richness of our faiths, and great variety of beliefs and practices, we share a mandate to care for our sacred common home, which sustains and nourishes the whole community of life.

We witness with grave concern that climate disruption, environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse threaten not only the flourishing of life, but the very survival of all living beings. We face increasing droughts, floods, accumulation and mismanagement of waste, leading to outbreak of disease, chronic socio-economic injustices and a widening poverty gap. Time is running out, and we are at a tipping point. The global climate crisis and ecological collapse is so extreme that a new level of mobilisation is required. Our response is underpinned by ethical principles and indigenous knowledge systems, and driven by visionary and co-operative leadership. We recognise the central role played by communities of faith.

We have reached consensus regarding our concerns, commitment and response to the following broad environmental issues:

- **Consumerism and Waste**
- **Energy and Climate Justice**
- **Food and Climate Justice**
- **Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss**

We are united through our shared calling and common commitment to care for the community of life and to seek justice for the Earth and future generations.

## **Consumerism and Waste**

Our economic system is based on the pursuit of constant growth, and as a result we consume more resources than the Earth can sustainably regenerate. Consumerism has damaged our natural environment, particularly our life-giving resources of air, land, water and forests. We generate increasingly significant amounts of waste, without sufficient waste service delivery or sustainable waste management solutions in place. In particular, we note the growing use of single-use plastics.

We call on the local government to commit to improving waste collection services, including frequency of collection, accessibility of waste accumulation points, and increase the provision of waste receptor bins.

We call on business owners and entrepreneurs to venture into waste recycling services, and we call on industry to be accountable and take responsibility for the waste that they produce and to implement sustainable production and procurement practices.

We call on the fossil fuel industry to stop increasing production. We call on consumers to refuse single-use plastic and reduce their consumption and waste.

We commit as faith leaders to raise awareness in communities on ideal waste management practices that promote refusing, reducing, reusing, repurposing and recycling of waste at household level.

We further commit to being water-wise at our places of worship, sacred spaces, institutions and homes. We also commit to fostering gratitude, appreciation and value for all of Earth's resources.

We call on our government to design and implement policies that promote a circular economy that produces less waste.

### **Energy and Climate Justice**

The high cost of energy, the scarcity of the utilization of alternative sources of energy like solar, and the fact that the majority of rural Zambia is not connected to the grid, results in an extreme reliance on wood and charcoal for fuel.

We are aware that our energy use contributes to climate change. Whilst we are able to take individual measures to mitigate this, the systems that regulate, produce and price energy hinder the systemic change that is necessary for a just energy transition to happen at a faster pace. Therefore, as faith leaders, we must be a prophetic voice of the climate crisis.

We call on faith communities to help collectively shape a new narrative of economic development that supports the wellbeing of all living beings. We commit to carrying the message of climate and energy justice, from ourselves to our households to our places of worship and beyond.

We call on our government to extensively invest in renewable energy sources, and to encourage, through policy, private investments in energy provision.

### **Food and Climate Justice**

The dominant industrial food system is driving climate collapse, social injustice, and ecological devastation, and increasing hunger, obesity and malnutrition.

The push by seed companies, supported by government policies and strategies, to use hybrid seeds rather than local-traditional seeds by small-scale farmers could result in higher input costs (seeds, fertilizer, weedkillers, etc.) for farmers and adversely affect the extent to which they are able to contribute to food and nutrition security. .

We call on industry and government to radically transform the food system, to restore the integrity of our spiritual connection to seed and farming, and advance agroecology. We call on our government to enact laws and policies that that promote and support the use of local-traditional seeds in our food system.

We commit to encourage the production and consumption of indigenous foods and the use of traditional methods through passing on stories in our communities, of the symbolism and cultural connections from historic times.

We commit to involving the voice of faith communities in the processes of policy development and holding government accountable.

### **Deforestation and Biodiversity Loss**

Zambia is heavily reliant on charcoal and wood as a source of livelihood and energy. Clearing of large tracts of land for industrial agriculture, logging and land use change are all contributing to the continuous loss of forest reserves, increasing soil erosion and land degradation.

Deforestation, through human actions, and extensive use of toxic chemicals that harm living things are contributing to the mass extinction of the natural biodiversity and altering of ecosystems in Zambia and the world over..

We call on our governments to uphold and strengthen their commitments to international agreements regarding biodiversity conservation and adhere to national-level forest conservation targets.

We call on traditional leaders to commit to conserving nature, forests, and holding communities accountable to their actions.

We commit to working with the communities to identify alternative sources of energy and adapt to more eco-friendly energy sources.

We commit to continue broadening the campaign of restoration of forests through tree-planting of various indigenous species.

We commit to promote and support communities to transition to agroecology to reduce the use of harmful chemicals..

We commit to learning more and raising awareness about deforestation and biodiversity loss and planetary boundaries within our faith communities and the general public. We also commit to the underlying principles of listening and being inclusive of indigenous knowledge and appropriate methods of engagement.