

Glasgow as a new landmark of sustainability: Realizing the green transition through a global effort



13th March 2021

As European Christian laypeople, we worry about the health of our planet and the wellbeing and future of humankind. The Earth is heading to a temperature rise of approximately 4°C, far away from the pathway agreed in Paris in 2015 of a rise in global temperature of maximum 2°C and preferably 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. This will lead to an irreversible degradation, resulting in melting of glaciers and polar ice, rising sea levels, an increase in droughts, food shortages, violent storms and many more drastic consequences. We perceive that creation has been exploited and abused, that the balance of life is threatened and that the ecological crisis deepens continuously.

Linking poverty, wealth and ecology, Pope Francis stated that climate change, global poverty and inequality are impeding the foundation of the common home. We are called and empowered by the Holy Spirit, to enjoy the beauty of our planet; to cherish value and dignity in all creation and to reconcile nature and humanity, embracing our responsibility to care for creation.

The promotion of environmental justice is related to peace-building. The climate crisis affects all of us, but it affects particularly the most vulnerable, amongst them, indigenous communities and subsistence farmers. Those who already have the smallest benefits endure the largest consequences of climate change. Indifference is not the Christian option. We must care about the misery that our sisters and brothers bear and that the young generation will bear in the future. They remind us and implore us to act 'now' in a responsible and sustainable manner. Europe should be a role model and a leader in addressing climate change. According to the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, our prosperous nations must do more than others.

1. In December 2020, the EU decided to increase the European climate target to at least 55 percent below 1990 levels by 2030. This deadline defines an important landmark on the way to climate neutrality in the EU by 2050. We call for the rapid implementation of effective measures during this decade and beyond to achieve the agreed goals. Climate neutrality is particularly important. It should be put into constant action. Additionally, we demand that net zero targets should be clearly divided into emission reduction targets and carbon capture targets, instead of offsetting the effects of both strategies. We urge the EU to stay united in the COP 26 negotiations.
2. Consideration of social concerns during the necessary transition is crucial. An ecological approach does not work without a social balance and care for those most in need. We need to hear the cry of the earth and of the poor. Those whose climate footprint is the smallest, should not bear the heaviest burden.
3. Economic prosperity and ecological conversion should not be seen as conflicting goals. We call for investments in research in technologies and circular economy as well as in education and information to foster the social-ecological transition.
4. In a globalised world, trade influences emissions worldwide. The WTO rules do not prevent effective political action to combat climate change, but neither do they contribute necessarily to mitigate the climate crisis. Regional trade agreements can be an avenue to push the green transition in international trade. While we recognize the benefits of an EU Mercosur Agreement for the people in Europe and in South America, we call for greater ecological awareness in the final negotiations. In no case a treaty that causes ruinous

exploitation of forests should be ratified. A joint commitment linked to a process of sustainable development of the economies is the minimum that we expect regarding ecological standards. More generally, we expect the EU to develop a carbon tax policy for imported goods.

As IXE, we feel committed to encouraging support in our Churches and in our respective countries for a sustainable future and preservation of the creation. Neither in pandemic nor in climate crisis can anybody be saved alone. We recognize that efforts at the individual and community level are indispensable and instead of falling back to our previous habits, we are called to convert to a positive approach to living sustainably during and after the pandemic. Let us rediscover the values of frugality and simplicity. Let us seize the opportunities of ecological conversion and explore new ways of living together. We must contribute to ecological and social justice and peace, becoming one single human family.

The Initiative of Christians for Europe (IXE) is an association of lay organizations and committed Christians from different European countries. General concern of IXE is to incorporate a more vivid awareness of a united Europe in the national debates. The initiative aims at fostering the encounter of Christians in Europe and to promote the Social Doctrine of the Church in order to achieve a better mutual knowledge and understanding of historical and cultural differences. More information: www.initiative-ixe.eu.