

## UNANIMA International at COP29: Advocacy & Religious Life

### Journeying to COP 29

As we prepare for our journey to COP29, we are reminded of another journey at another time: the visit by Mary to Elizabeth in the gospel of Luke (LK:1, 63-64). What is clear from the story is that it is about relationships, and this relationship takes place in the context of a journey. The encounter bears witness to the urgency of the journey: “Mary went with haste.” We all now feel an urgency as we journey to Azerbaijan for COP29.

We, Sisters of UNANIMA International have been on a journey together at the grassroots for the past year. We are convinced of the need to **coordinate, collaborate, and communicate the distinctive voices of religious actors** throughout the world at various UN and international events. We are witnesses to a world that is in a fragile state, where there are poor, overlooked, and especially neglected women, children, and girls. As a group we want to see change. We want to raise our voices and demand that things must be different.

In a society where women were oppressed and denied their rights, Mary and Elizabeth created a “space” where they could share their stories, their experiences of God, and their hopes for a better future, and where they dared to prophesy and proclaim their respective visions of Liberation. Likewise, at this time in our history as we journey to COP29, we, religious women, have found in our faith, the hope and strength to struggle for justice, for dignity, and the right to participate in the creation of a better future for all people. Journey is for the people we represent who do not have voices. We are making ourselves available for this journey, showing solidarity with, and encouragement to women and girls in difficult circumstances, especially those furthest left behind in our world.

And here we are now preparing for our next encounter at the 29th Annual United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will run from November 11th to November 22nd 2024. These COP Conferences (Conference of Parties) have taken place yearly since 1995, except for 2020, which was postponed due to Covid. Over the years COP has traveled far and wide from Berlin to Buenos Aires, Kyoto, Cancun, Bali, Marrakesh, and Paris. The aim of this annual event is the finessing of new agreements to see off the specter of climate change.

**Why COP?** The United Nations climate process has moved the needle when it comes to our response to climate change. When the UN climate treaty was first signed in 1992, it triggered a wave of national laws, policies and regulations that have rippled out across every country on earth. This process has started to shift every aspect of our modern economic system, especially the step away from 200 years of reliance on fossil fuels.

**Why go to COP29?** Some argue that a few hundred diplomats could manage the haggling over the UN official documents under negotiation. But it is worth noting the impact other participants can have, especially Religious. Like our work at the UN in New York, many new pledges and promises emerge on the sidelines of the official negotiations. These “coalitions of the willing” wish to make progress in specific sectors such as reducing methane emissions, halting deforestation, and green investment.

**What needs to happen at COP29 in Baku?** Many are describing it as the “finance COP” where representatives from all countries around the globe will come together to set a new global climate finance target for the first time in 15 years. There will be pressure for countries to significantly increase the global climate finance target to address the discrepancy between the financial needs of developing countries and what is currently flowing to them. Additionally, with a nationally determined contribution (NDC) update on the horizon, countries will be expected to announce their intentions to submit bold and ambitious NDCs for the next five-year cycle. Demonstrating progress towards commitments on cities, energy, food and forests, as well as scaling up financial pledges to the “Fund for responding to Loss and Damage”, will need to be addressed urgently.



**The strapline for COP29 is: “In solidarity for a Green World.”** To achieve this solidarity, it is essential for negotiators to increase the total amount of climate finance to support developing countries. Most estimates find that developing countries, after deploying their own resources, will need an additional \$500 billion to \$1 trillion per year in climate finance from international sources, which is five times as much as the current \$100 billion commitment. If their debt burden is not dealt with, these developing nations are left unable to invest in climate change mitigation or adaptation. Therefore, negotiators must also clearly lay out the timeframe and terms of this additional climate finance, what the finance will support, how it will reach the communities that need it most, and how all climate finance will be measured.

The COP29 Presidency’s plan is based on two core pillars: to “enhance ambition” and to “enable action.” Through these pillars, the Presidency of COP29 describes climate finance to developing countries as a “a key tool to turn ambition into action and reduce emissions, adapt to climate change and address loss and damage.” Countries committed under the 2015 Paris Agreement to establish a new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG) in 2024 that would replace the \$100 billion annual target, so achieving progress on defining the NCQG for aiding developing countries will be “crucial to a successful outcome.” Closing the finance gap, along with pursuing “strong adaptation strategies,” setting bold NDCs, and growing the “Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage,” have been established as critical parts of achieving a robust outcome at COP29.

### **And where does this leave us as Religious Communities?**

Religious communities and religious leaders have a significant role to play in addressing climate change and climate justice, which requires deep transformation within our communities and our societies. We already know what changes are needed to diminish long-term harm to our planet.

### **Our Call:**

- ❖ Inspire our communities to be change agents for climate action, and sources for inspiring and motivating politicians and policy makers
- ❖ Enroll in the Laudato Si’ Action Platform
- ❖ Make lifestyle changes to reduce your environmental and carbon footprint
- ❖ Find, support, and join local or national movements that are asking for enhanced climate action
- ❖ Engage with us at the UN to learn about other ways you can have influence

### **Conclusion**

And ending as WE began with the visitation experience and our unique journey to COP29, like Mary and Elizabeth we journey first as listeners to hear sacred stories, and to be prophetic in our speech, and courageous in our actions at this global gathering. This sacred journey we are embarking upon on your behalf, and on behalf of those furthest left behind in our world. Like Mary and Elizabeth this journey will take us to unknown places in ourselves, with others, and with the global community.