



Ivet Cortés Rodríguez walks alongside a small stream where her father Alfredo Cortés and her grandparents reforested the watershed near the family's lands in Oaxaca, Mexico [Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS].

CRS Asks for COP29

SOLIDARITY AND CLIMATE ACTION TO SUPPORT DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

“There is a need to act with urgency, compassion and determination, since the stakes could not be higher” – Pope Francis¹

Background

The UN climate change conference, [COP29](#), will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11-24 November 2024. The parties are meeting at a time when the predicted devastating impacts of climate change are becoming part of our everyday lives. In the 12 months since COP28, extreme weather events have resulted in a massive loss of life, caused billions of dollars of damage to infrastructures and destroyed countless livelihoods.² Tragically, these increasingly catastrophic effects of global warming are magnified by their unjust distribution: developing countries are the most severely affected by climate change although they have done the least to cause this crisis. The [IPCC 6th assessment report](#) warns of the likelihood of breaching the target of keeping global temperatures below 1.5°C and calls for much stronger and urgent actions to secure a livable and secure future for all. In addressing the problem of climate change, it is critical that actions be taken using a climate justice lens.

This is a decisive COP. As the official international relief and development agency of the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is committed to addressing the underlying causes of poverty, climate change

and injustice. We work with governments, local communities and organizations, the Catholic Church and other faith groups in developing countries to bring about lasting change. As Pope Francis has noted, the ***climate crisis is an opportunity to reconfigure international relations with a new commitment to collectively promoting the common good***. Above all, this call to action means that developed countries must lead the way in achieving emission reductions and in providing adequate and equitable access to financial support for adaptation, resilience, and accelerating low carbon development pathways for developing countries. The international climate change regime is built on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances. Accordingly, developed countries have an obligation to provide climate finance to developing countries.

COP29 can only be a success if real and measurable progress is made in embracing the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, equity and justice in these six key ways:

¹ Watkins, Devin. “Pope Francis: ‘Path to Climate Resilience Impeded by Short-Term Greed’”. Vatican News, May 2024.

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-05/pope-francis-sciences-academies-climate-resilience-audience.html>.

² Hausfather, Zeke. “State of the Climate: 2024 Now Very Likely to Be Warmest Year On Record,” Carbon Brief, July 2024. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/state-of-the-climate-2024-now-very-likely-to-be-warmest-year-on-record/>.

Secure a new global climate finance goal that responds to developing countries' needs

COP29 is being dubbed the “Finance COP” where global leaders need to agree on a New Collective Quantifiable Goal (NCQG). This new target will replace the one agreed upon in 2009, where developed nations promised to provide \$100 billion annually by 2020 to help developing countries reduce emissions and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Governments will not only be tasked with significantly increasing the total amount of climate finance, but also specifying the timeframes and terms under which this financing is provided, and defining what the finance will support, how it will reach the communities that need it most, and how total climate financing will be measured.

The agreed amount needs to be predominantly grant-based: a key lesson of the 2009 commitment of \$100 billion was that climate finance in the form of non-concessional loans resulted in drastic increases to the already crushing debt loads of these countries. More than half of the 54 most indebted developing countries are also ranked amongst the most climate vulnerable countries, and almost all of them are paying four times in external debt service payment³ of what they paid in 2010.⁴ Loans versus grants significantly undermine countries' ability to respond to the impacts of climate change.

Countries must also agree on direct access modalities for developing countries through national and sub-national institutions. Applying the principle of subsidiarity, local organizations and communities that are on the front lines of the climate crisis should be able to access this finance to support their own priorities and action plans.

Outside of formal negotiations, parties will need to address mobilizing new sources of funding, as any new NCQG will be insufficient. This may include broader reforms of the global funding architecture, such as including a UN Tax Convention⁵ that would end or redirect harmful subsidies (such as fossil fuel subsidies), and new '[solidarity levies](#)' on wealth or high-emissions activities. Reforming multilateral banks also needs to be part of the equation.

The NCQG must also include a robust accountability and transparency framework to ensure that commitments are

actually met and that climate finance is additional to development assistance.

Build momentum for stronger national climate commitments

With 2024 recognized as likely the hottest year on record, urgency to scale up parties' emission reduction efforts is critical. Maintaining the 2015 Paris Agreement target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C must remain a top priority. In particular, the world's largest emitters are expected to announce their intentions to submit ambitious new Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that aim to avert a global climate catastrophe. This anticipated renewed commitment along with the necessary finance to achieve those goals will ideally motivate other nations to follow suit. The climate crisis requires an “all hands on deck” response.

Countries should also agree to more ambitious and systemic NDC sector-specific targets, such as concrete goals for shifting to emissions-free energy and for food systems. They should put people first as a guiding principle to ensure a ‘just transition.’ And they should include stronger adaptation commitments with a focus on the most vulnerable, marginalized groups and communities.

These commitments must also align with sectoral targets outlined in the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) and with countries' own longer-term National Adaptation Plans (NAPs). COP29 is the final opportunity to set clear expectations regarding the goals to which this next generation of NDCs should aspire.

Phase out fossil fuels

COP28 included a historic commitment to transition away from fossil fuels. Parties agreed on commitments to triple renewable energy production capacity and double energy efficiency by 2030. At COP29, countries will now need to specify exactly how they will reduce their reliance on fossil fuels and achieve a just transition to renewable energy sources.

Get adaptation on track

Parties adopted the UAE Framework for Global Climate Resilience at COP28. The framework emphasizes human well-

³ “Climate Vulnerable Countries Debt Payments Highest in Three Decades.” Debt Justice, June 2024. <https://debtjustice.org.uk/press-release/climate-vulnerable-countries-debt-payments-highest-in-three-decades#:~:text=The%2050%20countries%20most%20vulnerable,respond%20to%20the%20climate%20emergency>.

⁴ Jensen, Lars. *Avoiding Too Little Too Late on International Debt Relief*. United Nations Development Program, October 2022. <https://www.undp.org/publications/dfs-avoiding-too-little-too-late-international-debt-relief>.

⁵ *Promotion of Inclusive and Effective International Tax Cooperation at the United Nations: Report of the Secretary General*. United Nations General Assembly, July 2023. <https://financing.desa.un.org/secretary-generals-tax-report-2023>.

being, livelihood protection, and nature preservation. For climate resilience, it prioritizes food and agriculture, water, cities and infrastructure, ecosystems, nature, health, livelihoods, and cultural heritage.

A cornerstone of the UAE Framework is the two-year UAE-Belem Work Program which will develop indicators to monitor, report, and enhance national adaptation work, an area that has often been given lower priority relative to mitigation. Adaptation can no longer be an afterthought, as the impacts of climate change are getting worse every year.

COP29 represents a critical juncture for parties to give adaptation the priority it deserves and to commit to providing the necessary resources to implement appropriate adaptive measures. As noted above, there is a notable gap between the increasing financial needs of developing countries and the current levels of assistance for climate change adaptation. It is therefore essential that parties include language on finance that ensures that progress towards achieving commitments is measured and that parties are held accountable for fulfilling their funding obligations made as part of the UAE Framework.

Given the inevitability of increasing devastating impacts of climate change, robust adaptation strategies are essential. National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are vital tools in successfully implementing relevant programs. The Global Stocktake called on parties to have their NAPs in place by 2025. At COP29, this global NAP assessment process will be concluded, and parties will agree on resulting requirements for providing sources of finance to implement these plans. COP29 is also an important opportunity for governments to signal the importance of participatory planning—including consultation with communities and civil society organizations that are at the frontline of climate change impact—to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable populations are prioritized, and to incorporate nature-based solutions in adaptation actions.

Show progress towards existing commitments on food systems, agriculture and nature

Agriculture, as the largest employer in the world, provides 40% of the world's population with income and accounts for at least 10% of global gross domestic product (GDP). It also contributes to one-third of total greenhouse gas emissions. Developing countries are home to the majority of the world's 500 million smallholder farmers, fishers, herders, and forest-dependent communities whose livelihoods are dependent on natural resources. Smallholder farmers produce one-third of the world's food. The agriculture sector is particularly

vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, making it in the interest of all governments to provide the requisite support to adapt to the impacts of climate change. National Adaptation Plans must reflect the priorities of smallholders, particularly women and female-headed households, because they are bearing the brunt of climate impacts.⁶

Historically, COPs have produced a variety of commitments related to agriculture and food systems including the Global Methane Pledge, Aim for Climate, and Fast Partnership. COP29 represents a unique opportunity for countries to stand by their pledges and announce the concrete steps they are taking to achieve them, as well as agreeing to a framework for providing accurate data and information on their progress. More progress is also expected towards fast-tracking and taking concrete action towards implementation of the 4-year Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security, whose progress has stalled since parties reached a decision at COP27.

Garner pledges for the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage

COP28 resulted in an agreement to fully operationalize the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, to which 700 million dollars have been pledged. It's important for these pledges to be turned into contributions so that the Fund can start disbursing finance in 2025. Also, new pledges need to be made so that the Fund has the resources to respond to the losses and damages that countries are experiencing. Thus, leaders need to come to COP29 prepared to pledge to levels commensurate with the emerging crises in developing countries. In addition, donor countries should provide financial support to the Santiago Network, which provides technical assistance to developing countries.

Conclusion

Climate change is a global problem requiring international cooperation to solve it. For years, lack of climate finance has been the most important impediment in negotiations to agree on common solutions. At COP29, parties must therefore build on past decisions to better promote and implement more ambitious climate action in line with overwhelming scientific evidence. Solidarity, leadership and commitment to the common good must be the core inspiration for COP29 decisionmakers.

⁶ *The Unjust Climate – Measuring the Impacts of Climate Change on Rural Poor, Women and Youth*. FAO, 2024. <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/20d564b5-2842-4230-b81a-4c7b0179e320>.