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The main entrance of the Sharm el-Sheikh International Convention Centre where COP27, the annual United Nations climate conference, is taking place Nov. 6-18 (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)



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Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt — November 11, 2022

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The Holy See and other Catholic leaders around the globe have resolved that the challenge of climate change requires a consensus-based approach rooted in solidarity, saying world leaders' failure to come together and fully implement previous agreements is a threat to human well-being and the health of the planet.

At the United Nations climate conference, COP27, being held in the Egyptian resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh Nov. 6-18, religious leaders are meeting various delegations of civil society groups, climate activists, experts and other faith-based organizations to deliberate on how to achieve climate neutrality — net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The church leaders noted that such conversations across groups are essential in developing a consensus-based approach to decision-making in addressing climate change.

Leaders at the U.N. climate summit were to discuss and commit to implementing strategies for such things as financing countries' emissions-reduction goals and establishing new ambitions to keep global warming below 1.5 degrees Celsius. But church leaders say world leaders have not made significant progress on those goals yet, and it's time for them to take action and save the planet from multiple climate hazards.

"There is no vision related to the environment from all the discussions of climatic factors we have received from the convening," Archbishop Nicolas Thévenin, the Vatican's apostolic nuncio to Egypt, told EarthBeat in Sharm el-Sheikh, after speaking during an event on the sidelines of the global climate conference. "Our role is to focus on the spirit of togetherness that should be there and dominating all the meetings and topics being discussed. We should also find a solution on how as a church we must fight climate change and share the same ideas with other groups attending this event."

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The prelate is the deputy head of the Holy See's delegation, which for the first time has official representation at a COP summit since they started almost three decades ago. The Vatican announced it had become a formal party to the U.N. Framework

Convention on Climate Change earlier this year.

Thévenin said the Holy See's representatives would take advantage of their presence to address ways of tackling climate change and push wealthy countries to compensate poorer ones for the loss and damage caused by climate change.

"The main framework in which we are doing our role as Holy See is that we are not proposing technical solutions, but we can sometimes make people come together and be part of the solution," he said, referring to various discussions they have held with different groups to find a solution to climate change.

The archbishop said he believes that the planet can avert the worst consequences of climate change by all stakeholders coming together and finding solutions to combat it.

"In order to solve this problem of climate change, we must be more dependent on each other, listen to each other, and try to find common solutions," he added. "Once we have discovered the approach together, we can see what to do to prevent the worsening of the situation and make the countries better places."



The apostolic nuncio to Egypt, Archbishop Nicolas Thévenin (front row, third from left), who is the deputy leader of the Holy See delegation to COP27, poses for a group photo with Catholics at the U.N. climate conference. The Catholic groups present included the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, the Laudato Si' Movement and International Alliance of Catholic Development Agencies. (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)

At the Nov. 10 event co-hosted by the Holy See, Senegal and Madeleine Diouf Sarr, chair of the Least Developed Countries group at the UNFCCC, the archbishop pleaded with wealthy nations to work together and find a solution to all climate-related issues and not to forget vulnerable communities suffering from the impact of polluting countries.

"It is imperative that we build bridges of solidarity. Those who are most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change are urgently calling for real support in this moment of crisis," Thévenin said in his statement addressing Catholics in the Senegal pavilion.

Different Catholic organizations attending the convening agreed with his views and those of Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, who had earlier addressed the world leaders, reminding them that each one had a responsibility to take action on climate change.

"We cannot allow for this to happen. Climate change will not wait for us. Our world is now far too interdependent and cannot permit itself to be structured into unsustainable isolated blocks of countries," Parolin said in his speech on Nov. 8. "This is a time for international and intergenerational solidarity. We need to be responsible, courageous and forward-looking not just for ourselves, but for our children."



Aloysius John, the secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, poses for a photo at the climate change convening in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, Nov. 10. (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)

Aloysius John, secretary general of Caritas Internationalis, the international humanitarian and development organization of the Catholic Church, said Caritas would not give up on pushing for its agendas at the COP27 convening or on finding solutions to tackle climate change that has severely affected communities around the world.

John told EarthBeat that Caritas' main agenda is to continue advocating for developing countries and vulnerable communities who continue to bear the brunt of consequences from the actions of wealthier nations. He said their push for the inclusion of loss and damage would ensure rich countries responsible for the largest share of greenhouse gas emissions compensate climate-vulnerable nations.

"As an organization, we represent the poor and vulnerable people around the world. Therefore, we want to make sure that the voices of the poor are heard," he said.

"Climate change is a very serious issue; in fact, it should be treated as a pandemic because most people who are poor have gone through serious situations and are in dire need of help."

"This chance to be at the COP27 is an opportunity to advocate for climate justice and bring to the world's attention the sufferings of vulnerable communities due to climate change, even though they are not directly responsible for it," John added.

This story appears in the **COP27 Egypt** feature series. View the full series.
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