

Demonstrators participate in a protest demanding pay for loss and damage at the COP27 U.N. Climate Summit Nov. 16 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. (AP/Peter Dejong)



by Doreen Ajiambo

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt — November 17, 2022

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Catholic sisters are among thousands of activists raising concerns about the slow progress of COP27 United Nations climate talks, saying that negotiations on the financial aspect — specifically a loss and damage fund — risks the likelihood nations will deliver and build upon climate commitments made in Glasgow last year.

This year's U.N. climate change conference, taking place in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, and scheduled to end Nov. 18, has been expected to address the roles of climate finance, adaptation ambition and implementation of the Paris Agreement.

However, one negotiator told EarthBeat that a major issue of contention in the negotiating rooms is whether there should be a new fund for loss and damage and how any such fund should be allocated.

"We haven't made any progress so far," said one delegate, asking not to be named. "We might extend our negotiation until Saturday (Nov. 19) or leave the talks without agreement on the way forward. It's embarrassing that rich countries are not ready to establish loss and damage funds. They want this discussion extended to the next convening in the United Arab Emirates" in 2023.



Adrian Dominican Sr. Durstyne Farnan carries a placard as she demonstrates at the central area of the conference center in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)

"Let’s act now or never. We don't need any more talks because we know the situation," said Sr. Durstyne Farnan, an Adrian Dominican sister from Michigan. "World leaders must quickly agree on ways of fighting climate change to save the planet from damage," she said, noting that it's going to be important for "wealthier countries like the United States," where she comes from, to "find a way to work with other partners in the world, especially small islands that are being washed up and

washed away."

Farnan, who has been participating in street demonstrations at COP27, said her congregation was disappointed in the slow progress of negotiations and said it was unfair for wealthy nations to fail to implement climate mitigation funds while funding fossil fuel companies.

"We have a responsibility as religious to speak and at least be present at the events of COP27. We have many of our sisters in the Global South, and they have already told us what's happening to their land — there is drought and floods, and people have lost livelihoods due to climate change," she said.

Religious sisters have been pushing for world leaders to commit to reducing emissions and finance loss and damages resulting from climate change to the Global South.

> 'We don't need any more talks because we know the situation. World leaders must quickly agree on ways of fighting climate change to save the planet from damage.'
> — Adrian Dominican Sr. Durstyne Farnan
>
> Tweet this

Archbishop Nicolas Thévenin, the Vatican's apostolic nuncio to Egypt and a member of the Holy See delegation to COP27, urged nations to reach a "concrete decision" on loss and damage during a Nov. 15 meeting of heads of delegations on a final document for the summit.

"A new facility on loss and damage is urgent to respond to the cries of the poorest. We must ensure that the concrete mechanisms necessary can be established in a timely fashion following this decision," he said, adding that such a fund must effectively support the poorest people and consider both economic and non-economic aspects of loss and damage.

Thévenin also stressed the Holy See delegation's hopes for the final text to convey "both urgency and responsibility," and said they were pleased to see the 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature limit reflected in talks after some worried that nations would back away from the more ambitious goal in the Paris Agreement.



Comboni Missionary Sr. Paola Moggi works with the Vivat International team at COP27, the U.N. climate change conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)

Comboni Missionary Sr. Paola Moggi — whose congregation has a significant presence in 16 African nations — said she was perplexed that the inclusion of loss and damage in the COP27 agenda remains a "hot issue" and "political game" that developed countries are not willing to discuss and decide upon a solution that will benefit the world and better protect the planet.

"What I see is that negotiations are very difficult here, and the progress is very slow because interests, especially financial interests, prevail," said Moggi, representing VIVAT International, a faith-based NGO working to bring the voice of grassroots communities to the U.N. "The special focus on finance and the debate on the loss and damage of financial facilities can be addressed not only from the material point of view but also from an immaterial point of view — cultural and spiritual damages need to be considered."

Sr. Ernestine Lalao, representing her congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd from Madagascar, pleaded with wealthy nations responsible for the climate crisis to sympathize with those in developing countries who are excessively affected by climate injustices, and to agree to compensate them.



Adrian Dominican Sr. Durstyne Farnan (left) from Michigan, poses with Sr. Ernestine Lalao, a member of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd from Madagascar. (EarthBeat photo/Doreen Ajiambo)

She said Madagascar is one of the countries in the world most affected by human-induced climate change, although it produces few greenhouse gas emissions. She said the country had experienced famine, cyclones, forced displacement, and loss of lives and livelihood due to the impact of climate change.

According to the CDP Africa Report, Africa produces less than 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, the report indicates that China is responsible for 23%, the U.S. for 19% and the European Union for 13% of global greenhouse gases.

"Let the fruits of all negotiations and promises be put into action, and action is very urgent," she told EarthBeat in Sharm El-Sheikh, urging world leaders to use the remaining few days to make a decision that will save the planet from destruction. "Everyone on this planet has a great responsibility for this great global challenge in the fight against climate change. Developed countries are really invited to support underdeveloped countries like Madagascar, which is among the most victimized by climate change."

Advertisement

Farnan urged COP27 participants not to give up on their push for climate solutions. "We will continue praying that all countries trying to put their best efforts into climate mitigation will continue to do that, and we will support them through our prayers, energy and commitment," she said. "We will also care for mother earth from where we are. We can do it on our own by mitigating our consumption and limiting carbon emissions."

"Catholic sisters can bring an alternative perspective of spirituality to this COP so that we overcome the technological bias that is present here," said Moggi, as she called for solidarity and prayers before the delegates unveil a final document that sets out their core objectives for tackling the climate crisis.

Lalao urged world leaders to commit to fighting climate change because it is "the work of God."

"They should make this commitment in faith, hope and love, knowing that we are participating in God's work of transformation," she said.

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