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Pope Francis joins others in holding a banner during an audience at the Vatican June 5, 2023,

Pope Francis joins others in holding a banner during an audience at the Vatican June 5, 2023, with the organizers of the Green & Blue Festival. The banner calls for financing a "loss and damage" fund that was agreed upon at the COP27 U.N. climate conference in 2022. The fund would seek to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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A faster change of course away from today's throwaway culture and toward greater care for the common good is necessary to ensure the planet's livability for future generations, Pope Francis said on World Environment Day.

The pope called on people "to move away from the throwaway culture toward ways of living marked by a culture of respect and care; care of creation and care of our neighbors, whether they be near or far from us either geographically or through time.

Meeting at the Vatican June 5 with the organizers of a festival supporting sustainability and bringing together activists, researchers, artists and scientific experts in Rome and Milan, Pope Francis noted how science increasingly demonstrates that actions taken today will have an effect on the environment for thousands of years.

"This has also increased our sense of responsibility to God, who has entrusted us with the care of creation, to our neighbors and to future generations," he told the group of organizers of the "Green & Blue Festival: Earth For All."

World Environment Day was established in 1972 and is celebrated every June 5 to promote awareness about protecting the environment.

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Combating climate change, Pope Francis said, requires recognizing one's responsibility to those "who have contributed least to its occurrence" — the world's poorest and most vulnerable — and developing a sense of "responsible cooperation" among everyone.

"Our world is now thoroughly interdependent and cannot allow itself to be divided into blocs of countries that promote their own interests in an isolated or unsustainable way," the pope said. "The real enemy is an irresponsible behavior that has profound consequences for every aspect of the lives of the men and women of today and tomorrow."

The pope said that changing the current model of consumption and production is "an immense and demanding challenge" that is possible to face.

He gave the example of efforts at the Vatican where the tiny city-state is trying to eliminate the sale of single-use plastic items on its territory. "These are steps, real steps that we have to continue," the pope said.

After the meeting, Pope Francis helped the organizers hold up a banner that read "Loss and Damage. Finance Now," a reference to a fund that was agreed upon at the COP27 U.N. climate conference in 2022 after decades of pressure from vulnerable developing countries. The fund would seek to provide financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by the effects of climate change.

Related: What is loss and damage?