Opinion
EarthBeat
A motorcycle and bulldozer are seen on a smoggy morning in New Delhi, Nov. 17, 2023. Pollu

A motorcycle and bulldozer are seen on a smoggy morning in New Delhi, Nov. 17, 2023. (OSV News/Reuters/Anushree Fadnavis)

Bridget Moix

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Spring and summer are gardening time for many of us in the United States. I love this annual ritual of planting tiny seeds in the ground and watching what emerges. It reminds me that miracles are constantly happening all around us.

The growing season, however, is coming earlier and earlier each year. Last year was the hottest on record globally. This is not good news and far from a blessing. The Earth is heating at an unsustainable pace, and we would be loath to sit back and watch this trend grow like a weed.

Which is why responding to the impacts of our changing climate — and taking action to prevent further environmental calamities — is a matter of living my faith.

By now, we should know climate change is real, if not from the decades of clear and compelling evidence scientists have gathered, then from the direct impacts we see in our own lives and communities. From scorching summers to ever-more-devastating natural disasters, our planet and all those who inhabit it are facing more climate catastrophes each year.

I don't rely on what I grow in my garden to feed my family or support my community. Many people around the world do, however, and for them, climate change isn't a theory to debate: It's an imminent threat to their survival and livelihoods.

The passage of the Inflation Reduction Act in 2022 represented a huge step forward in responding to the climate crisis at home. We're already seeing hundreds of billions of dollars in renewable energy and green economy investments making a difference for our communities. In 2023 alone, the green economy reaped nearly $60 billion in investment from the IRA, creating 50,000 jobs. In just one example, Toyota, with the $12.6 billion it has received to create batteries for electric vehicles, will hire 3,350 North Carolinians.

Investments like these will help people, but also help tremendously with reducing domestic greenhouse gas emissions.

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While responding to the climate crisis here in the U.S. is critical, so too is supporting other countries in their own responses. The IRA did not address the rising levels of emissions outside the United States, or help countries, especially those in the Global South, adapt to the escalating disasters climate change is unleashing abroad.

As one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases in the world, the United States has a historic and moral responsibility to do more. Those gases don't stay neatly within our borders. We are truly an interdependent world and need to deal with climate change as a global community.

Those on the front lines of the climate crisis in the Global South have done the least to contribute to the crisis but are bearing the worst of its impacts, leaving them more vulnerable to economic instability, natural disaster, forced migration and conflict. An estimated 26 million people worldwide are falling into poverty every year

due to floods, droughts and other extreme weather events.

Fortunately, Congress has another chance to do the right thing. The FY25 appropriations process, now underway, presents a new opportunity to support communities around the world and at home to mitigate the impacts of climate change and adapt to hotter temperatures, more extreme weather, higher sea levels and changing agriculture patterns.

Over the next month, the House Appropriations Committee will be drafting and voting on the funding bill that includes international climate assistance. Our voices are needed to ensure that this bill adequately invests in this critical assistance.

Investing in international climate assistance is fundamentally about justice. It is a moral obligation we bear as part of the global family and a political responsibility as one of the countries most responsible for the problem. It is not only the right thing to do; it's a smart investment: Every dollar invested in strengthening community resilience to climate change generates between $2 and $10 in future benefits.

Congress should plant new seeds of global leadership this appropriations season by investing generously in international climate mitigation and adaptation programs. We will all reap the fruits of a more just, peaceful and sustainable world that can and will grow from it. The time is now.