

U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Statement on Climate Change

Statement

We, the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph Leadership Council and (Congregation/Province), compelled by the Gospel and by our heritage to be responsive to the "dear neighbor" without distinction, are concerned for all of God's creation and our sisters and brothers everywhere. Earth, which reflects God's glory, is in great peril. We accept scientific evidence that climate change is happening and is caused by human activity. "There is now widespread acknowledgement that the countries least responsible for global climate change will be the ones most severely threatened by it." (UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report)

Climate change is a global issue which affects all creation. The United States alone adds almost six billion tons of carbon dioxide every year to the atmosphere. This seriously contributes to climate change. All creation suffers the consequences.

"Climate change is expected to have a net negative impact on water scarcity globally this century. By the 2050s, area subject to greater water stress due to climate change will be twice as large as the area experiencing decreased water stress."(UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report)

In *Caritas in Veritate* Pope Benedict XVI writes "The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole." (No. 48)

"Responses to global climate change should reflect our interdependence and common responsibility for the future of our planet. Individual nations must measure their own self-interest against the greater common good and contribute equitably to global solutions." — U.S. Bishops

Impact on Women and Children

"Many destructive activities against the environment disproportionately affect women, because most women in the world and especially in the developing world are very dependent on primary natural resources: land, forests, water", said Nobel Peace laureate, Maathal of Kenya. Women have primary responsibility for providing food, gathering wood, finding water—tasks needed for survival.

Talking Points

Our environmental crisis is not a separate, isolated concern. Our attitudes, conscious or unconscious, are part of this crisis. The way we respond toward one another in this country and outside this country, the way we live and the way we teach our children will determine the level of awareness in this crisis. Until we are aware, we will not bring about change in our destructive manner of living and being. [See additional page for talking points]

Action Steps

We urge our government officials to join the world community to enact legislation which will reduce the emissions of global greenhouse gas (GHG). We join NETWORK in pursuing the U.S. Congress to support "Environmentally-conscious transportation (shifting from oil-based to "green" alternatives), construction and infrastructure development. "

We call on all people of the U. S. – and we commit ourselves – to reduce carbon emissions by our activities and life styles so that all God's people, particularly the poor and vulnerable, will not suffer the devastating consequences of climate change. We recognize that what we do to Earth, we do to ourselves! Therefore, as the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Associates, we commit ourselves to support ALL life on Earth.

Talking Points:

“There is now widespread acknowledgement that the countries least responsible for global climate change will be the ones most severely threatened by it.” (UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2007 Synthesis Report)

1. Women are particularly affected by the dramatic changes in climate patterns. Women living in poverty are the most threatened by the dangers that stem from global warming. In 1991 when a cyclone and flood severely affected Bangladesh, the death rate was almost 5 times as high for women as for men. (WEN Women’s Environmental NETWORK- U.K based).
2. In the last 50 years the world ocean has accumulated 22 times as much heat as has the atmosphere (data provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration of the Department of Commerce). It is this repository of heat — through processes like evaporation and ocean overturning — that drives the changes in weather we are experiencing: heavier precipitation events, sequences of large storms, bitter cold spells and prolonged droughts in some regions.
3. The I.P.C.C. 2007 report also found that winds have changed — specifically circumpolar westerly winds (those blowing from the west) in both hemispheres. This ominous sign means that weather fronts and weather patterns are less stable.
4. Halting climate change would reduce cumulative mortality from various climate-sensitive threats; namely, hunger, malaria and coastal flooding by 4-10% in 2085. Reducing the vulnerability to these threats would reduce cumulative mortality from these risks by 50-75%. (Policy Analysis, CATO Institute)