

UNANIMA International COP27 Statement

UNANIMA International is a Coalition of 22 Communities of Women Religious, and a group of ‘Friends,’ serving in over 85 countries with 25,000 members.¹ For over 20 years our focus has been on women, children, and girls – groups that are consistently most left behind. Our mission is to educate and influence policymakers at the global level on the areas of homelessness/displacement, migration, gender equality, and climate change. In solidarity, we work for systemic change to achieve a more just world. We envision a future where women and children who live in extreme poverty in our society will be empowered to achieve a better quality of life.

In our twenty years as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), UNANIMA International has closely followed international climate change proceedings, in particular the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Last year’s COP in Glasgow was no exception. Many reports from NGOs and climate change leaders have expressed the exclusion of groups experiencing the ramifications of climate change from entering COP spaces and participating in the Blue Zone.² Moreover, the current financial commitment of \$40 billion dollars per year (by 2025) made by Member States at COP26 is not nearly enough needed for developing countries to meet climate adaptation targets by 2030.³ These unfortunate truths make COP27, being held this year in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt that much more important.

Our advocacy work and research on Family Homelessness has taken us to places like Kenya, the Philippines, Madagascar, India, Brazil, Mexico, and Australia where the climate crisis isn’t just another item on an agenda – whole livelihoods, lands, and species face existential and extreme environmental threats. A testimony shared with us from Kenya detailed the circumstances a young woman and her siblings faced amid climate-induced displacement and starvation due to drought.⁴ In Small Island Developing States, intense storms have stifled girls’ access to education and have put families at greater risk for homelessness.⁵ We know that immediate onset climate events act as risk-multipliers and triggers; one tsunami, forest fire, or earthquake can level entire communities in a matter of minutes. However, slower onset changes in climate, like desertification, actually increase the likelihood of migration and displacement to a larger degree than natural disasters since people have more time to adapt and plan their relocation.⁶ This insight and the growing body of knowledge on the effects of climate change gathered by experts and NGOs points to significant local, national, and international policy consequences.

How will we house and accommodate those fleeing climate-related disasters and phenomena? When and how will the wealthier nations of the Global North step up to decrease emissions that are having disproportionate effects on the Global South or Global Majority countries? What will it take for Member States, multinational corporations, and stakeholders contributing to the fossil fuel/extractive industries to begin the necessary process of improving production and consumption patterns? How many lives and lands need to be lost before the topics discussed at COP will actually lead to implementation?

To our members and the countless individuals and families barely making ends meet due to poverty and the worsening climate crisis: we see you. We hear you. And we too are tired of broken promises and failed commitments. ***We stand in solidarity with the climate activists, youth, women, Indigenous***

leaders, and civil society organizations paving the way for a more sustainable relationship with our planet and environment.

At COP27, UNANIMA International will be amplifying the messages and lived experiences shared with us from the grassroots level both in-person and online. We will speak to the intersections between gender justice and climate justice, ensuring that the on-the-ground realities of women and girls are not cast aside or simply limited to one thematic “Gender Day” throughout the Conference. We have also been collaborating with our NGO and civil society partners on virtual events and discussions in the lead up to COP. The urgency of this moment cannot be understated. We need a whole-of-society approach and the political will to make good on the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and now a UN General Assembly Resolution which officially recognizes the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.⁷ At UNANIMA International we continue to follow the mantra “don’t talk about us, without us.” With the inclusion of critical stakeholders like civil society, the private sector, and UN agencies at COP27, perhaps “Implementation COP” can become an ongoing practice and outcome that brings us together for the preservation of future generations on Earth.

Recommendations

In our publications, UNANIMA International has offered sets of policy and advocacy recommendations based on the findings from our research and the testimonies shared with us from vulnerable communities. Many of the recommendations related to environmental protections and climate change are especially relevant in the lead up to and the months after COP27. As such, we recommend:

- Member State amend educational curricula to include education on sustainable production and consumption ensuring knowledge around emissions and pollutants, waste disposal and degradation of Indigenous and other lands.
- The creation of policies and programs to prevent illegal mining and extraction activities and limit other projects in areas where biodiversity is endangered, in consultation and collaboration with stakeholders including women and children.
- Assessments on necessary interventions regarding infrastructural and industrial design, as related to communal health and housing and land security, and consideration of opportunities for creation of community gardens in urban food-insecure areas.
- Co-construction of efficient management policies, programs, and implementation of plastics and other ocean pollutants, with coastal communities, including women and other vulnerable groups in the process.
- World leaders acknowledge the strong connections between climate and environmental issues and Family Homelessness and take actions to transition towards green economies.

- Implementing response plans for potential and predicted sea-level rise and coastal erosion in all human-settled coastal areas, including plans for relocation of communities and families where there is a level change.
- Mitigating migration toward urban areas located on vulnerable coasts, by increasing allocation of funds to support the livelihoods of rural communities, as well as to poverty eradication and increased employment opportunities throughout Member States' territories.
- Creating legislation that drastically decreases rates of deforestation; supporting women's and other grassroots movements that focus on reforestation.
- Making displacement of Indigenous groups from their land for conservation or development projects illegal within national legislation, most preferably through constitutional amendments.
- Recognizing the necessity of animal and plant species' survival to human health and wellbeing, creating protections for them and initiatives for their restoration or preservation where necessary.
- Encouraging a better understanding of migration as an adaptation to changes in the natural environment, as well as reflective of human societies and governance systems.
- Promoting the inclusion of all stakeholders, including women and children in the management and decision-making surrounding local forests, ecosystems, and their inhabitants.

References

1. See UNANIMA International website. <https://unanima-international.org/>
2. <https://lens.civicus.org/cop26-elitist-summit-leaves-us-far-from-climate-justice/#:~:text=In%20violent%20contrast%20to%20civil%20society%E2%80%99s%20exclusion%2C%20COP26,at%20COP26%2C%20far%20bigger%20than%20any%20government%20delegation.>
3. <https://news.un.org/story/2022/10/1129127>
4. UNANIMA International. "Family Homelessness Through the Lens of the United Nations 2030 Agenda," UNANIMA International, Vol. I (2019): 75. <https://unanima-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/WEB-SDGs-brochure.pdf>
5. Ibid, 27.
6. Šedová, B., L. Čizmaziová and A. Cook 2021. "A meta-analysis of climate migration literature. Discussion," paper No. 29. Center for Economic Policy Analysis, Potsdam. Available at <https://publishup.uni-potsdam.de/opus4-ubp/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/49982/file/cepa29.pdf>.
7. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482>