

## JOHANNESBURG DECLARATION

### *A New Vision for Sacred Life and Living Earth*

7<sup>th</sup> November 2019

eMseni Christian Centre, Gauteng, South Africa

We, members of faith communities from across Southern and Eastern Africa, gathered in Gauteng, South Africa, from 5-7 November 2019, to explore *A New Vision for Sacred Life and Living Earth*.

In the richness of our faiths, and great variety of beliefs and practices, we share a mandate to care for our sacred common home, which sustains and nourishes the whole community of life.

We witness with grave concern that climate disruption, environmental degradation and ecosystem collapse threaten not only the flourishing of life, but the very survival of all living beings. We face chronic socio-economic injustices and a widening poverty gap. Time is running out, and we are at a tipping point. The global climate crisis and ecological collapse is so extreme that a new level of mobilisation is required. Our response is underpinned by ethical principles and indigenous knowledge systems, and driven by visionary and co-operative leadership. We recognise the central role played by women and young people.

We have reached consensus regarding our concerns, commitment and response to the following broad environmental issues:

- **Animal Justice**
- **Biodiversity Loss**
- **Consumerism and Waste**
- **Energy and Climate Justice**
- **Food and Climate Justice**
- **Land and Water Justice**

We are united through our shared calling and common commitment to care for the community of life and to seek justice for the Earth and future generations.

## **Animal Justice**

Animals are commodified and exploited for human use. They are often deprived of their right to act according to their natural behaviour and endure extreme suffering to meet human demands.

Animals deserve access to clean water and a well-balanced, nutritious diet; freedom from discomfort, pain, injury and disease, and fear and distress; and freedom to express normal behaviour. We call on our governments to align with animal welfare legislation that recognises animals as sentient beings, and this must be an African-wide commitment.

We commit to learning more about this issue and to taking a more active role, highlighting the need for animal justice among our faith and broader communities.

## **Biodiversity Loss**

Human actions are responsible for the mass extinction happening within the biodiversity of the web of life.

We call on our governments to uphold and strengthen their commitments to international agreements regarding biodiversity and adhere to national-level conservation targets.

We commit to learning more and raising awareness about biodiversity loss and planetary boundaries within our faith communities and the general public. We also commit to the underlying principles of listening and being inclusive of indigenous knowledge and appropriate methods of engagement.

## **Consumerism and Waste**

Our economic system is based on the pursuit of constant growth, and as a result we consume more resources than the Earth can sustainably regenerate. Consumerism has damaged our natural environment, particularly our life-giving resources of air, land, water and food. We generate significant amounts of waste, including toxic extractive waste that is dumped in poor communities. In particular, we note the growing use of single-use plastic.

We call on our governments to implement policies that promote a circular economy that does not produce waste. We call on the fossil fuel industry to stop increasing production, and all of industry to be accountable and to take responsibility. This includes recycling and alternative products that are not harmful. We call on corporates to acknowledge their impact on the environment and to implement sustainable production and procurement practices. We call on consumers to refuse single-use plastic and reduce their consumption and waste.

We commit as faith communities to model best practice by reducing consumption, eliminating food and packaging waste, and being water-wise at our places of worship, sacred spaces, institutions and homes. We also commit to fostering gratitude, appreciation and value for all of Earth's resources.

## **Energy and Climate Justice**

We are aware that our energy use contributes to climate change. Whilst we are able to take individual measures to mitigate this, the systems that regulate, produce and price energy prohibit the systemic change that is necessary. Therefore, as faith leaders, we must be a prophetic voice of the climate crisis. We must offer a vision of hope for a just transition from fossil and nuclear energy to renewable and equitable systems, with affordability and access for all.

We call on faith communities to help collectively shape a new narrative of economic development that supports the wellbeing of all living beings.

We commit to carrying the message of climate and energy justice, from ourselves to our households to our places of worship and beyond. We also commit to campaigning for efficient public transport systems, and to measuring and reporting on our own energy justice initiatives.

## **Food and Climate Justice**

The dominant industrial food system is driving climate collapse, social injustice, health pandemics - including hunger, obesity and malnutrition - and ecological devastation.

We call on industry and government to radically transform the food system, to restore the integrity of our spiritual connection to food and farming.

We commit to collaborative learning about the controlling forces that separate creation from their sustaining life sources, and authentic action to revive and nurture the whole community of life.

## **Land and Water Justice**

Access to land and water resources is unjust, and the land, water and air are disrespected.

We call on our governments to enact policies that respect and protect the community of life's sacred land-connection, as well as our universal rights to clean water and sanitation. We also call on governments and communities to promote equitable access to land, underpinned by the principles of care and fairness.

We commit to holding governments and communities accountable to their promises. We also commit to becoming more conscious of how we use our scarce resources, particularly land and water. This includes encouraging faith communities to review their own land and water-use policies.