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Press Conference to present the Message of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation (1 September 2022)

At 13.00 today a press conference was livestreamed from the Holy See Press Office to present the Message of the Holy Father Francis on the occasion of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to be held this coming 1 September.

The speakers were His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J., prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, Sr. Mary John Kudiyiruppil, SSpS, associate executive secretary of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), and Ms. Christina Leaña, associate director of the *Laudato si' Movement*.

Bishop Jose Colin Mendoza Bagaforo of Kidapawan, Philippines, national director of Caritas Philippines and of the *Laudato si'* Programme of the Episcopal Conference, was present with a video contribution.

The following are their interventions:

Intervention of His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny, S.J.

The Holy Father's message for this year's Celebration of the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation implores the world to "*Listen to the voice of creation*" and hear its bittersweet song: sweetly praising the Creator, bitterly lamenting our mistreatment of nature.

Worried about this mistreatment, the Holy Father calls for bolder action from all nations during this year's COP27 and COP15 summits on climate change and biodiversity.

Regarding COP27, Pope Francis again joins scientists in holding to the Paris Agreement's temperature increase goal of 1.5°C. The planet already is 1.2°C hotter, yet new fossil fuel projects every day accelerate our race towards the precipice. Enough is enough. All new exploration and production of coal, oil, and gas must

immediately end,[1] and existing production of fossil fuels must be urgently phased out. This must be a just transition for impacted workers into environmentally sound alternatives. The proposed Fossil Fuel Nonproliferation Treaty holds great promise to complement and enhance the Paris Agreement.

Many Catholic institutions are already divesting from fossil fuel corporations[2] and striving towards a net zero climate impact.

Regarding biodiversity, the Holy Father highlights the need for a new UN agreement to halt the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species. At least half of the earth and oceans need to become protected areas by 2030,[3] and ravaged ecosystems must be restored, always upholding the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities. May this limit the harm inflicted by “the great extractive industries” that Pope Francis calls out – “mining, oil, forestry, real estate, agribusiness”.

I am happy to announce that the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development is strengthening the *Laudato si'* Action Platform by naming John Mundell as its Director. Mr. Mundell is an environmental engineer with *Laudato si'* experience on behalf of the Focolare Movement.

During this Season of Creation, may all Christians come together to celebrate creation's sweet song and respond to creation's bitter cry.

[1] IEA, *Net Zero by 2050: A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*, 2021.

[2] *Laudato si'* Interdicasterial Guidelines, *Journeying for the care of the common home*, 2020.

[3] E. Dinerstein et al, A “*Global Safety Net*” to reverse biodiversity loss and stabilize Earth's climate, *Science Advances*, Vol. 6, No. 36, 2020.

Intervention of Sr Mary John Kudiyruppi

Pope Francis' message for this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation begins the month- long Season of Creation beginning on September 1. It calls us “to cultivate our ecological conversion” and practice “an ecological spirituality” which acknowledges that we are “not disconnected from the rest of creatures but joined in a splendid universal communion.” When we reach this deep awareness we become attentive to the sweet song rising from the luxurious diversity of creation. But we can also hear the cry of anguish from our sister, Mother Earth who cries out from the abuses and destruction which we inflict on her. This in turn deeply affects the lives of poor people, indigenous people, the young and the elderly. Our vocation is to be protectors of God's handiwork and so we hear the call to repent and modify our lifestyle. In addition Pope Francis reminds us that Cop27 (the Conference on Climate Change) and Cop15 (the Summit on Biodiversity) offer us an opportunity to advocate together for lasting change and for the development of models of consumption and production that respect creation and the integral develop of all peoples.

The members of the International Union of Superiors General participate each year in the Season of Creation, using the guide for times of prayer and reflection, and for promoting action. This year's theme “Listen to the Voice of Creation” requires a type of deep listening that is often absent today. This listening is more than just hearing. It is contemplation which open us to hear the many voices of creation, to be nurtured by its beauty and abundance and to be disturbed by its disfiguration and destruction. As we listen deeply we too feel called like Pope Francis, to cry out and say “in the name of God...stop destroying forests, wetlands, mountains...stop polluting and poisoning food and people.” As religious sisters we commit ourselves during this Season of Creation to pray for conversion of heart (during our liturgies and prayers) to advocate for change (through our

symbolic acts) and to raise awareness through our congregational ministries. During this Season of Creation we join the worldwide community in embracing our vocation to care for our common home. We will intensify our efforts, through deliberate and enduring initiatives to make known the ancient wisdom of the jubilee in relation to the earth: remember, return, rest and restore.

Intervention of Ms. Christina Leañó

Pope Francis' message for this year's Season of Creation is one of urgency and hope. It emboldens our *Laudato si' Movement* of Catholic individuals and institutions, laity and religious, youth and elder, from the Global North and Global South in our common mission to care for our common home.

The Holy Father reminds us that the Season is a time of both contemplation and action. We are to pray in the "great cathedral of creation", to listen to the anguished cries of creation in the countless silenced species, our brothers and sisters of the native peoples, the poor, and the youth. We are called to respond with concrete deeds "to do everything possible to prevent, or at least limit, the collapse of our planet's ecosystems."

We at *Laudato si'* Movement are honored to be part of the ecumenical steering committee of the Season of Creation along with the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development and our Protestant, Orthodox, and other Christian sisters and brothers. Each year the committee publishes a guide with prayers, action suggestions, and resources to celebrate the Season which can be found at SeasonOfCreation.org.

In a global ecumenical invitation to join the Season, these faith leaders declared that "As an unstoppable wave [during the Season of Creation], Christians from all over the world will witness to listen and respond together to the cry of creation."

Christian institutions will be joining Pope Francis in urging "the great extractive industries – mining, oil, forestry, real estate, agribusiness" to change course through actions such as fossil fuel divestment.

We will be calling for the needed communal conversion at the upcoming UN summits on biodiversity and climate to "adopt a new multilateral agreement to halt the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of species" and urge "more ambitious nationally determined contributions in order to reduce to zero, as quickly as possible, net greenhouse gas emissions."

In recent days, over 1,100 people have died in Portugal and Spain's heat waves. In Monterrey, México, 5 million people are without water. And London has just registered temperatures of 40 celsius, as hot as the Sahara. We can see that, as Pope Francis says, "we are reaching a breaking point."

Pope Francis says, "[D]elay on the part of others can never justify our own failure to act." Inaction is no longer acceptable. We at the *Laudato si'* Movement lift up the Pope's message in hope, trusting, as our ecumenical faith leaders have shared, that "each initiative will be an essential piece of the mosaic that only together we could create." We journey together in faith and commitment.
