



## Climate Justice



Ethics in Action for Sustainable and Integral Development

*Statement on Climate Justice*

December 15, 2017

*Laudato Si'* calls on us to redress a world beset by structures of injustice. We can point to five main challenges of injustice that threaten human dignity, undermine the common good, subvert democracy, and endanger our very survival and health due to environmental degradation. These are:

*Global promises by governments that are not kept*  
*The persistence of unequal distributions of income and wealth*  
*Unjust redistributions from poor to rich*  
*Bullying associated with corporate lobbying*  
*States that do not accept migrants while adding to distress causing these migrations.*

In addition, for the first time in history, we are faced with the grave threat of human-induced climate change, the moral dimensions of which are a core feature of *Laudato Si'* and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We have examined the challenge of climate justice in light of these structures of injustice. We acknowledge that scientific evidence can *attribute* the harms of environmental degradation to identifiable agents, such as the major producers of fossil fuels and governments that fail to regulate economic activities for the public good. Such "attribution" is in the form of a probability or likelihood that human actions have caused a specific loss or damage. For example, scientists have shown that recent heat waves, extreme rainfalls, and floods have been made more likely (and therefore more frequent) because of human-caused global warming (<https://www.climatecentral.org/analyses/>).

In turn, the global warming is the result of dangerous and unconstrained use of fossil fuels. As Pope Francis points out in *Laudato Si'* in discussing climate as a common good, "a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity." (*Laudato Si'*, 23). Moreover, thanks to recent investigations, it is possible to identify the companies that have contributed most to the historical rise of carbon dioxide (<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10584-013-0986-y>). For example, according to one widely used study, ExxonMobil and Chevron together contributed 6.74 percent of global industrial emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> between 1751 and 2010.

*Ethics in Action* identified several ways to address climate justice. These include public actions to regulate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions under the Paris Climate Agreement; behavioral and attitudinal changes by the lead managers of major companies; responsible investing by universities, foundations, insurance companies, pension funds, and others (sometimes called environmental, social, and governance Investing); divestments from the fossil-fuel industry; consumer boycotts of companies that befool the environment with impunity; legal challenges to the behavior of companies and governments, including compensation paid to those suffering "losses and

damages" from climate change and other environmental degradation (such as air and water pollution); public awareness campaigns by religious leaders, climate scientists, energy engineers, public health officials, and others; and other means.

*Ethics in Action* members agreed that there is no single "magic bullet" to overcome climate injustice. Many tools should be deployed, and those tools should be tailored to the specific conditions and needs of different communities and parts of the world. A comprehensive and effective global effort should be top-down as well as bottom-up; through moral suasion as well as public policy; and through cooperation as well as litigation. All pathways will be needed, and on an urgent basis, given the grave and potentially irreversible consequences of unchecked global warming.

In this spirit, *Ethics in Action* identified eleven action items that it would carry out during 2018 and beyond in order to contribute to global solutions. In this work, *Ethics in Action* will of course seek partnerships and participation in global forums and processes at the United Nations and UN agencies, as well as other venues. *Ethics in Action* will report on its activities and progress in this regard at the end of 2018, with recommendations for further steps in the following years.

### **Ethics in Action Initiatives for Climate Justice**

**Ethics in Action outreach** to ten top oil and gas companies: Gazprom, Rosneft, ExxonMobil, Petro China, BP, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, Petrobras, Lukoil, Total, Statoil, ENI; (All members of Ethics in Action; Meetings proposed for Rome, NY, Sao Paulo, Moscow)**Legal Analysis** for strategies on Losses and Damages, Public Trust, and Government Accountability (Cesar Rodriguez, Lisa Sachs, Dan Galpern, Yann Aguila)**Meeting of Universities and investment funds on Ethical Investing in, and Divestment From, the Oil, Gas, and Coal Sector** (Erin Lothes, Lisa Sachs, University of Notre Dame) **Support to the Niger Delta Bishops** and local Niger Delta communities to meet with Royal Dutch Shell under the auspices of Ethics in Action. (Jeffrey Sachs, Cardinal Onaiyekan, Bill Vendley)**Convening in NYC of Climate Impacted Small-Island States** at the United Nations (under the auspices of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network) to discuss strategies for climate justice, including public health. (Jeffrey Sachs, Dan Galpern)**Create MOOCs and organize workshops on Laudato Si' and the Ethics of Climate Change** (All participants of Ethics in Action, SDG Academy, Fetzer Institute)**Introduce Global Pact for the Environment to the G20 Process** (Yann Aguila, Jeffrey Sachs)**Convening of the Interfaith Rainforest Alliance** and the Rainforest country representatives at the UN and regional meetings (Amazon, Congo Basin, Southeast Asia) to discuss adoption of zero deforestation goals.**Convening leaders of faith communities** to develop strategies for inspiring, educating, and mobilizing our congregations and faith communities at the local level in support of comprehensive action to address climate change. (Fetzer Institute)**Supporting the WHO Initiative and First Global Conference on Air Pollution and Human Health**, October 30 – November 1, 2018, and communicate EIA support to the WHO Director General. **Support efforts to price carbon emissions**, especially through carbon taxes, to make sure polluters are held financially accountable for the costs they impose on society.