



LAUDATO SI GENERATION: YOUNG PEOPLE CARING FOR OUR COMMON HOME
International Conference on the 4th Anniversary of *Laudato Si'* and 5th Anniversary of CYNESA.
(Nairobi, 15th-16th July 2019)

CONCEPT NOTE

“Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future, without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded.” (LS, 13)

Introduction

This summer is the Fourth Anniversary of *Laudato Si'* which stresses key themes resonant in Africa and which offers us a path forward. *Laudato Si'* paragraph 79 states:

In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation...The work of the Church... “must above all protect (hu)mankind from self-destruction”.

Our world is already at 1 C of warming since the industrial era and we know that another .6 C is in the pipeline, stored in ocean warming that will be released over the next 30-40 years. Thus, we are at the 1.5 C danger level already and the time to turn away from fossil fuels and toward life-giving development for all is now. LS 165 stresses the obligation to transition off of fossil fuels without delay.

Laudato Si' also emphasizes the importance of biodiversity and that “we have no such right” to eliminate other species from this earth. The recent report on Global Assessment on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, which was released by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) warns that 1 million out of 8 million species are at the risk of extinction. In Africa, the richly biodiverse lungs of the planet such as the Congo Basin are facing biodiversity and this calls for urgent action (*Laudato Si'* 38). *Laudato Si'* and the Po.pe’s statements since, point to the respect and guidance we should seek from indigenous peoples. *Laudato Si'* was written for all humanity and in this conference, we reach out to all people of faith and conscience, realizing we need to do much more and go much further, faster, and together. People of other faiths have observed that *Laudato Si'* has often been more influential for them than for Catholics. This conference seeks to bring people of different faiths into dialogue for “a new and universal solidarity” (*Laudato Si'* 14). There is wisdom and guidance there for us all, unifying calls around change we need in our economic systems, which are producing vast inequality and ecological debt, as well as the environmental changes we need to make.



Africa is on the front lines of climate change, in terms of water poverty (Laudato Si' 28), drought, extreme weather, displacement, and death already being experienced. Africa's development will have to be clean and renewable, to embrace a life-giving path. This conference will explore how resources can be mobilized for the innovation and changes that are necessary.

The Africa-wide *Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa* (CYNESA) formed in 2014 to bring together young people from countries across Africa is a platform for this work as well, and whose approach was reaffirmed by Laudato Si. It is in this context that the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, CYNESA and UN Environment, are co-hosting the International Conference on the 4th Anniversary of *Laudato Si* and CYNESA's 5th Anniversary.

Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA)

Africa's youth are a vibrant and growing force on the frontlines of climate change in Africa and on the innovation and much needed change that are beginning to occur. They feel the urgent responsibility to ensure their communities, countries and the continent act as frontrunners for a safe, sustainable and productive future for them and for future generations. CO₂ and its effects live on in the atmosphere for so long, our actions now not only are critical for Africans of the current and next few generations; they are critical for the next trillion people to live on earth.

In the last 5 years, CYNESA has proved to be an effective platform through which young people across Africa can offer a response to the twin challenges of environmental degradation and climate change, from the perspective of Catholic social teaching on care for creation, paying attention to the most vulnerable. The next 5 years will be even more critical in advancing climate action and halting biodiversity loss, with the African continent on the frontlines. CYNESA is poised to grow its outreach and enhance its programs to face these challenges. *Laudato Si* provides solid grounding and sets the compass for the next five years.

The Conference Mission

The conference will be a forum for deeper reflection on Catholic social teaching on care for creation, from an African context and enriched by global perspectives. It will raise and address urgent needs and opportunities in Africa and explore how we can make the rapid shifts we need relating to clean electrification and local ownership and profit from development, while preserving indigenous wisdom and land rights. We will showcase best practices across the continent and the particular role of youth leadership and innovation.



Summit Goals

- A. To mobilize and create a pool of young people (Laudato Si Generation), ready to steer the African continent towards an equitable, sustainable and inclusive future;
- B. To examine innovative examples and best practices in addressing key challenges and rapid shifts needed in Africa and intimated in Laudato Si', such as the shift to renewable energy, urban green spaces and service provision, care for current and future generations, considering the "universal destination of goods"/public ownership and trust, cooperatives, and all types of collaboration. We will also provide an opportunity for meaningful discussion of the scale and types of turnarounds needed to reach the 1.5 C goal outlined in the Paris Agreement, supported by Pope Francis and many scientists and faith leaders. We will showcase key initiatives driving this positive change;
- C. To discuss and formulate long-term plans on climate action sufficient to the challenge at hand and protection of biodiversity, indigenous rights, and human rights, across income groups and across generations;
- D. To provide participants with the opportunity to expand their skills and knowledge of the continent for the advancement of opportunities and solutions to solving ecological challenges.

The thematic concern of the conference shall address;

- Climate change, latest climate science, impacts, risks, and opportunity areas
- Biodiversity

The conference will explore the opportunities that can be drawn from;

- Catholic social teaching, and the teachings of other faith traditions, on care for creation
- Networking and advocacy for environmental sustainability

Expected Participants

The conference shall bring together a total of 300 participants, including young people, indigenous people, interfaith partners and African environmental organizations. It is prudent for emphasis to be placed on the African Youth as they are the pillars of transformation and progress in our society. Participants from other regions of the world are also invited to enrich the conference.

Methodology

The conference will be conducted on participatory lines with liturgy, short plenary inputs, speakers' presentations, reports discussions, and followed by general and small group discussions. A follow-up committee will be established to monitor the implementation of the recommendations. This conference will be conducted in a manner that promotes social interaction, learning and appreciation of one another.



Date and venue of the conference

The two-day conference will be held from July 15th to 16th, at the United Nations complex, Gigiri, Nairobi.

Coordination

The conference shall be coordinated by a Secretariat composed of representatives from CYNESA, DPIHD, UN Environment and partner organizations. However, the Secretariat shall work hand in hand with the various committees that shall be formed to oversee the preparation and realization of the conference.

The Committees shall comprise, but not limited to:

- 1) Program
- 2) Communication and Publicity
- 3) Logistics and organization
- 4) Financial, Legal and Administration

Partnership

Synergy and cooperation are essential for positive and enduring changes on the African continent. By collaborating, we can turn off the tide of indifference and inaction in Africa and draw on the emerging creativity and innovation. The changes that are happening in Africa and across the world call for a large number of organizations and young visionaries to work together and help create a new vision to put us on a path towards a sustainable and inclusive future.

Expected outcomes

The conference team envisages achieving the following;

- Address urgent needs and opportunities in Africa, including plans to extend and build on innovations that are occurring in key areas.
- Better understanding scale and types of turnarounds needed to reach the 1.5 C goal outlined in the Paris Agreement, supported by Pope Francis and many scientists and faith leaders.
- Exploration of how we can transition faster and in locally appropriate ways to clean electrification and transportation, local ownership and profit from development, and greater preservation of indigenous wisdom and land rights.
- Deeper understanding of our role and potential, and the role and potential of youth across Africa, as well as next steps we can make, including further linkages out of the conference.
- Production of a collection of best practices across the continent



- Ideas for long-term plans on climate action sufficient to the challenge at hand and protection of biodiversity, indigenous rights, and human rights, across income groups and across generations.
- An upsurge in youth participation in care of creation in Africa
- Strengthened network of Catholic youth and inter-faith organizations dealing with environmental sustainability in Africa
- Re-energized youth ready to take head-on the challenge of climate action and halting biodiversity loss.