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As Pope Francis told world leaders assembled at the United Nations on 25 September last, man is not authorized to abuse the environment, much less to destroy it. When the environment is assaulted, the poor, least able to defend themselves, suffer most. We cannot remain blind to the grave damage done to the planet, nor can we remain indifferent to the plight of the millions of people who most bear the burden of such destruction. While no one has the right to condemn people to hopelessness and misery, this all too frequently occurs through destructive actions or culpable indifference. And while no one has the right to deprive future generations of the chance to live on our planet, this, unfortunately, is a horrible and ever more likely possibility.

Instead of being careful about this common home of ours, we have been careless. Damage flows from selfish, short-sighted economic and political choices. As a result, the cries of the poor and the desperate now join the groaning of the Earth. Those whose homes and livelihood are washed away by rising seas, or turned to dust by drought, where will they go?

Moreover, climate change is not limited to and cannot be managed by single States: “Everything is interconnected, and ... genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others” (Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [LS] 70). The deteriorating climate flows from the lifestyles of the better-off and from an obsolete notion of development or

progress. What we need is “another type of progress, one which is healthier, more human, more social, more integral” (LS 112, cf. 194).

We obviously face considerable difficulties in our efforts to adopt a new Agreement on climate change. We face the daunting and complex challenge of integrating multiple essential perspectives and sectors: finance, technology and capacity building, environmental science, data-management, monitoring and reporting, multilateral governance, and others. So our scientific and diplomatic task is immense. Please let us not lose ourselves in protecting current narrow interests.

In support of our efforts, people worldwide have been showing their environmental and social concern. On Sunday 29.11, 785,000 people in 175 countries joined in climate-change marches. Leading up to COP21, over 30,000 pilgrims in 35 countries on all continents walked and cycled roughly 280,000 km – more than 7 times around the world. And in Paris, 22,000 pairs of shoes provided an eloquent demonstration of people’s concern. We thank them all for speaking out, praying and pushing for climate justice. For we all can and indeed must do much better, transforming ourselves by way of an ecological conversion.

A great deal is at stake for every country. Progress has too long been based on fossil energy, to the detriment of the environment. This is the moment to take action. As many scientists and economists are warning, the longer we wait, the more difficult it will be to rectify environmental conditions – and the more damage and suffering the delay will cause.

As leaders and experts, our challenges are both common and differentiated. Some countries are asked to innovate in the energy sector or modify economic priorities; others face environmental ruin and massive dislocation of their populations, if not their very survival. What must unite everyone is a shared ethical framing of the common good and solidarity. Such virtues are indispensable for any transformation, for any effective commitment to change. It may be that a lack of ethical guidelines and motivation makes the current negotiations more difficult.

For instance, “solidarity” is no longer in the text; this could be an indicator of how the understanding of the principle of “common but differentiated responsibility” is

changing, despite the fact that everyone makes reference to it. Yes, differentiation: wealthy nations are not the same as others. And yes, fairness too: those who have contributed most to greenhouse gas emissions and have benefitted most from the industrial period should now take the lead and contribute more to the solution than those whose standard of living is just beginning to rise.

As Pope Francis has so strongly stressed: “It would be sad, and I dare say even catastrophic, were particular interests to prevail over the common good” (*Address at UNON*, Nairobi, 26 November 2015). May we be guided by a shared vision and fortified by determination and courage in order to secure a fair, legally-binding and truly transformational Agreement.

COP21 must be ambitious. Experts tell us that the world’s clean energy investment should be about \$2 trillion a year between now and 2030. This enormous figure amounts to less than 2 percent of world GDP, and is roughly the same as annual military spending world-wide. Thus, clearly, the issue is not so much “Can the economy afford it?” as “What are our priorities?”

Finally, a spirit of genuine and constructive dialogue is essential (cf. LS 163–175); this must involve “listening, patience, respect for the other, sincerity and also readiness to revise one’s opinion” (*Address on the 50th Anniversary of Pacem in Terris*, 3 October 2013). Dialogue is the way to build trust and confidence within the negotiations. Dialogue is the way to be transformative: to rediscover our human dignity and start afresh as brothers and sisters. Through the strengthening of dialogue, we will also discover how to prevent conflict and build peace, and we all know how much climate change can affect peace.

This is the far-reaching plea that Pope Francis is making: “When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results... We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving a habitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us” (LS 160).

Humanity is one family. As brothers and sisters, we have only one home, one

common home, and we all must care for it.

On his return from his recent trip to Africa, Pope Francis expressed confidence that the Paris leaders and negotiators have the necessary awareness and good will to accomplish what is needed (*In-flight Press Conference*, 30 November 2015). And last Sunday he stressed that: “for the sake of the common home, of all us and of future generations, in Paris every effort should be aimed at reducing the impact of climate change and, at the same time, at combating poverty and promoting human dignity. The two choices go together: stopping climate change and combating poverty for the flourishing of human dignity” (*Post-Angelus*, 6 December 2015). We are called to be courageous in taking such important decisions, maintaining as a basic criterion for our choices the greater good of the entire human family.

Thank you.