



Statement of the *Religions for Peace* Secretary General
on World Environment Day, 5th June 2026

5 June 2026 | World Environment Day

As we commemorate [World Environment Day](#) under the theme *Climate Action*, the Secretary General of *Religions for Peace* affirms our unwavering commitment to translate the vision of [Shared Sacred Flourishing](#) into strategic, sustained action – with a Call to Action for religious communities to exert their moral authority to speak not only to policy but also to conscience.

The climate crisis is not merely an ecological or economic dilemma. At its core, it is a profound moral and spiritual crisis. We must act to prevent the catastrophic outcomes of extreme weather events, loss of biodiversity, deep economic losses, famine due to crop failures, and mass migration as swaths of the world become unlivable.

Today, we are confronted with five realities that no person of conscience can ignore. Drawn from UNEP’s Emissions Gap Report, Adaptation Gap Report, and the Seventh Global Environment Outlook, the data speaks with devastating clarity:

- **Emissions are still rising.** Greenhouse gas emissions reached a record high of 57.7 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent in 2024 — higher than at any point in human history. [UNEP](#)
- **The 1.5°C threshold has already been breached.** In 2024, global surface temperatures were 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels — crossing the Paris Agreement’s most ambitious limit in a single year. [UNEP](#)
- **Tipping points are no longer distant.** At 2°C, nearly every warm-water coral reef would perish. At 3°C, the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets would likely begin irreversible collapse. At 4°C, the Amazon — the lungs and carbon vault of our planet — could degrade into savannah. [UNEP](#)
- **The economic cost is catastrophic.** Unchecked climate change could reduce global GDP per capita by nearly a quarter by 2100, with losses falling hardest on the world’s most vulnerable populations. [UNEP](#)
- **The outcome depends on political will.** On current policies, Earth is projected to warm by up to 2.8°C this century. Even full implementation of all existing national climate pledges would still leave us on track for 2.3–2.5°C of warming. [UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2025](#)

There are reasons for hope. The clean energy transition is accelerating despite political headwinds, and the economics of renewables are now unstoppable. But technology alone cannot drive the transformation we need. That requires a moral reckoning — and that is where faith communities become indispensable.

Religious leaders and their religious communities can and must act urgently in the face of the climate crisis, which is a profound moral and spiritual crisis. Every major religious tradition carries ancient teachings on stewardship, justice, and reverence for creation – these comprise a Shared Sacred Worldview. This worldview refutes the materialistic, reductionist perspective that sees our

forests and other natural resources as mere “inputs” to be exploited for financial gain – rather than as sacred features of our very existence.

The Shared Sacred Worldview underlies the Shared Sacred Flourishing framework that corrects the exploitative and destructive materialist, reductionist worldview – which is destroying the planet, our common home, and the web of life of which we are a part.

Governments have the tools; markets are shifting. What is needed today is the sustained moral weight that only faith communities and religious leaders can supply — the authority to speak not only to policy but also to conscience.

The US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change is the gravest blow to international climate cooperation since those agreements were forged. The dismantling of scientific infrastructure and the freezing of clean energy commitments are real setbacks. Yet they make the role of faith communities more urgent, not less: where governments retreat, moral leadership must advance. The COP30 Belém Pact, the Santa Marta fossil fuel transition process, and the commitment of over 130 nations to the Paris framework demonstrate that the world will not wait.

An Eight-Point Moral Imperative for Faith Communities

To translate the vision of Shared Sacred Flourishing into strategic, sustained action, we need to act on these vital areas:

1. Counter disinformation with moral authority

Religious leaders are among the most trusted voices in many societies — they have a credibility the fossil fuel industry cannot buy and which deliberate climate disinformation cannot easily erode. We call on faith leaders to use that trust explicitly: naming the climate crisis as a spiritual emergency, refuting disinformation from their platforms, and insisting that the protection of creation is a non-negotiable moral obligation in every tradition.

2. Champion the phase out of fossil fuels and end their subsidies

The continued burning of fossil fuels is the primary driver of the climate crisis, and religious leaders must treat its phase-out as a first-order moral imperative — standing behind the global transition movement with urgency and conviction. The COP30 agenda represents a critical political opening that faith communities must reinforce with their voices and influence. The economic structures sustaining fossil fuel dependence must also fall: governments provided an estimated \$7.4 trillion in fossil fuel subsidies in 2024 — nearly 6.5% of global GDP, more than they spend on education and approaching what they spend on health — and redirecting those resources toward clean energy, nature, and sustainable food systems is a moral imperative, not merely a technical policy debate.

3. Champion nature as Sacred — and as solution

Our traditions teach reverence for creation. Forests, oceans, wetlands, and soils are not merely economic assets — they are sacred inheritances. Religious leaders should advocate for ecosystem

protection and restoration, support forest conservation, and where possible commit religious landholdings to nature-based stewardship.

4. Transform the global food system — beginning at our tables

Every major faith tradition carries a sacred relationship with food that can help drive one of the most powerful climate solutions available: a shift toward plant-rich diets and reduced consumption of animal products, particularly beef and dairy, whose production drives deforestation, methane emissions, and land and water degradation. Drawing on frameworks including the EAT-Lancet Commission 2.0, we call on religious leaders to teach, model, and institutionalize sustainable dietary choices in community meals, food ministries, and religious observances.

5. Defend Indigenous peoples as the world’s most effective guardians of nature

Indigenous communities are not only among the most climate-vulnerable — they are the most effective defenders of the forests, waters, and biodiversity upon which all life depends. Yet their territories face escalating threats from illegal extractive industries. *Religions for Peace*, as a co-founder of the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) — alongside GreenFaith, the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, the World Council of Churches, the Parliament of the World’s Religions, Rainforest Foundation Norway, the Government of Norway, and the United Nations — is committed to defending Indigenous rights and protecting the Amazon and other vital carbon sinks. We call on all faith communities to amplify Indigenous voices, support land rights, and hold governments and financial institutions accountable.

6. Combat environmental crime — especially illegal gold mining

Faith communities must become active agents of accountability, not only advocates. Illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining is devastating Indigenous territories across the Amazon — and other tropical forests and ecosystems — poisoning rivers with mercury, destroying irreplaceable forest carbon sinks, and financing criminal networks that use violence to silence resistance. We call on houses of worship to document and expose these crimes, support affected communities, and press governments to act. Faith institutions with investments in the mining sector must scrutinize and end any complicity in this destruction.

7. Speak for the urban poor on the climate frontlines

Cities produce over 70% of global emissions, and the climate burden falls hardest on the urban poor: extreme heat, flooding, and air pollution disproportionately devastate marginalized communities. Religious leaders embedded in these neighbourhoods are frontline witnesses. We call for sustained advocacy for green infrastructure, sustainable cooling, and urban resilience.

8. Transform religious institutions and mobilize congregations for climate action

Houses of worship, schools, hospitals, and landholdings represent an enormous collective footprint — and an enormous opportunity. We call on religious institutions to audit their energy use, transition to clean energy, and reduce animal-product dependence and food waste in their own kitchens and

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programs. These steps lower costs, reduce emissions, and give visible witness to our values. At the same time, individual action multiplied across millions of congregants becomes transformative: embracing plant-rich diets, clean mobility, and climate-resilient livelihoods, while rejecting the extractive industries that sacrifice ecosystems and Indigenous peoples for short-term profit.

On this World Environment Day, we, religious leaders and religious communities of every faith, must translate moral conviction into ambitious action: ending fossil fuel dependence, restoring degraded nature, transforming our failing food system, protecting Indigenous rights, and delivering a clean energy transition for all. We do this through our institutions, our advocacy, and our daily witness — for the health of our common home and the dignity of all life – to build a world grounded in shared human flourishing.