



25 October 2021

H.E. Mr Mario Draghi
President, Group of Twenty, and Prime Minister, Italian Republic

Chair Mario Draghi and G20 leaders:

Your Excellencies:

The most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released in August 2021 finds that in most scenarios, the limit of 1.5°C global temperature rise above pre-industrial levels could be surpassed in less than two decades. This rise will have increasingly disastrous consequences on impoverished and vulnerable communities that contribute least to the climate crisis.

Our organisations – the World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), World Methodist Council (WMC) and Council for World Mission (CWM) – bring together half a billion Christians in over 100 countries. Many of our congregations are already experiencing devastating and intensifying climate impacts and many are also responding with concrete actions and proposals.

The root cause of the climate emergency is the current development model and ideology that is founded upon fossil fuel-driven economic growth. As some economies have grown wealthier, the climate and frontline communities have paid a heavy price. Unless a radical change is made to the current economic model, the goals of the Paris Agreement will not be met, and the climate crisis will not be averted.

A growing body of evidence points to the contradiction between attaining global sustainability and continuous economic expansion on a planet of finite resources and bounded by ecological limits.¹ Empirically, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have climbed together with GDP as well as declined alongside it. While the COVID-19 induced downturn resulted in a 7 percent drop in global GHG emissions last year, emissions are on the rise again as economies have emerged from lockdown. Signs of decoupling emissions from GDP growth have only occurred in rich countries that have outsourced emissions-heavy, carbon-intensive, and polluting industries to poorer parts of the world. Globally, the link between emissions and GDP growth remains strong.

Today, humanity is at a turning point. The climate emergency demands deep-seated transformations towards net-zero economies by the middle of the century, within a framework of justice and solidarity. And these changes must happen within a rapidly closing window of opportunity.

¹ See Helmut Haberl et al (2020), A systematic review of the evidence on decoupling of GDP, resource use and GHG emissions, part II: synthesizing the insights, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab842a>.

The path to a just and sustainable future and flourishing earth community is to be found in bold economic policies that re-embed economics in society and ecology, account for social and ecological risks and costs, as well as promote the redistribution of resources to allow space for low- and middle-income countries to combat poverty aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic and to respond to the existential challenge of climate change.

As you gather in Rome from 30 to 31 October 2021 ahead of the United Nations climate conference in Glasgow to deliberate on the theme of “People, Planet and Prosperity,” we ask that you consider the following proposals in support of commitments to reduce GHG emissions in line with science and the Paris goals:

- **Replace economic growth, particularly GDP, as the foremost indicator of progress with indicators that assess the whole human economic, social, and ecological condition.** Economic policies should be directed towards improving the health and wellbeing of communities and the planet as captured by alternative measures including decent work, health, and ecological sustainability, rather than merely increasing income and production.
- **Release countries, especially those at the forefront of climate change effects, from their onerous and historic external debts.** Debt cancellation would enable indebted climate disaster-stricken countries to break free from costly build-rebuild cycles that force them further into debt. It would make available resources for transitioning to a decarbonised economy. Further, allocating special drawing rights to developing countries could help leverage financing and jumpstart a just and sustainable recovery.
- **Implement progressive carbon and pollution taxes at various levels.** Carbon taxes, particularly on big corporations and wealthy consumers, would help to curb GHG emissions and mobilise revenues for investment in renewable energy as well as for meeting the costs of mitigation, adaptation and reparations for climate-related loss and damage in income-poor and climate-vulnerable countries.
- **Invest heavily in climate protection and the restoration of ecosystems on which all our economies are founded.** In particular, we must privilege such areas as agro-ecology, reforestation and community-based renewable energy systems in our COVID-19 recovery strategies and longer-term plans. Studies indicate that investing a mere 1.2 percent of global GDP in climate-friendly recovery packages could spell the difference in keeping global temperature rise below 1.5°C.²
- **Immediately end government subsidies to fossil fuel industries that artificially reduce the price of fossil fuel production and drive climate change.** Financial support must instead be directed towards building sustainability infrastructure and community resilience. Now is the time to incentivise a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable energies like solar and wind.

² See Piers Forster et al (2020), Current and future global climate impacts resulting from COVID-19, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-020-0883-0#Sec5>.



Climate change requires a system reset. Our vision of prosperity can no longer be devoted to growing the GDP and maximising profit but valuing and resourcing the future of life on earth. As part of our calling and mission to pursue life-in-fullness for all and bring restoration to creation, we as churches commit to redouble our efforts towards supporting those most affected by climate change and living sufficiently and sustainably on our only planetary home. We pray you will join us.

Yours sincerely,

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Acting General Secretary
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Rev. Philip Peacock
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Copies:

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