



**Wilton
Park**

Report: Going Further, Faster: Towards Radical Collaboration among Multi- faith Women-led Climate Action Networks

Monday 21 – Thursday 24
October

In association with

The British and Irish
Embassies to the Holy
See,
the International Union of
Superiors General (UISG),
Islamic Relief Worldwide

With support from
Project Dandelion,
UNEP's Faith for Earth
Coalition



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Foreword

**By Alison Hilliard, Chair of the Frascati meeting, and Senior Programme
Director, Wilton Park**

*A personal reflection: Going Further, Faster: Towards Radical Collaboration among
Multi-faith Women-led Climate Action Networks*

In October, 50 women climate activists of faith gathered in Frascati in Italy.

Organised by Wilton Park, in partnership with the British and Irish Embassies to the Holy See, Islamic Relief and the International Union of Superiors General, women from 15 different countries and 8 different faith traditions, came together to birth a new network of women of faith and their allies, committed to radical collaboration for climate justice.

Together they estimated they represented at least 73 million women worldwide. Not surprising when groups like the Mothers' Union -with over 4 million members in 83 countries- or UISG with its 600,000 Catholic sisters across the globe, or the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and its 6 million women, are around the table.

The power and the potential of this group of women didn't go unnoticed. Veteran UN climate activist and former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, reminded the group 'You are here to draw on your power. 5.8 billion people identify with faith- that's 80 %

of the world's population. Faith can be the foundation of transformative change to tackle our climate and nature crisis.'

That, in itself, is not a new rallying call. Wilton Park helped bring the world's top Faith leaders together in 2021 before COP26 to produce the Vatican Joint Appeal Process committing themselves and their followers to climate action. But the faith leaders who met then at the Vatican with Pope Francis were almost exclusively male- despite the fact that it's women of faith who are the powerhouses of climate action, pioneering projects from climate smart agriculture to renewable energy. So, here's the difference then. Three years later, this was a meeting of women of faith all wanting to work together, to learn from each other and to scale up the climate action they're already taking.

Young and older sat around the table. Ridhima Pandey, a young Hindu climate activist who has been busy taking the Indian government to court for its climate inaction, celebrated her 17th birthday with us. Indigenous women came from Cameroon and Tanzania. Leaders of organisations like Interfaith Power and Light which reaches about 4 million US women for environmental stewardship and climate action targeting congregations to cut energy using their Cool Congregations Programme or like the Laudato Si' Movement based on Pope Francis's encyclical letter, the first ever Papal encyclical devoted to the crisis of our planetary home. The movement has over 10,000 trained grassroots leaders working for Climate and Ecological Justice. 60 percent of them are women.

And this was a meeting driven by a sense of urgency- the 'fierce urgency of now'- recognising that that women and girls are most impacted by climate change and yet their voice in climate change policy making nationally and globally is often overlooked. As one participant said 'Please don't waste the opportunity for revolution or coup d'état. Women of faith may be the best last hope to save the planet'.

Mary Robinson was just as candid. She founded Project Dandelion, a women led global climate justice movement, and indicated why women of faith should join forces. In spelling out why, she shared this: 'I went recently to a funeral of a glacier in Iceland. We are not just witnesses; we are accomplices to the destruction of climate change and nature. It's an existential threat, rooted in injustice and women of faith can be active change makers. We are on the cusp of a wonderful world. What if our best times are ahead of us and we can have a world powered by solar energy, a circular economy, a fairer and more just world?'

That optimism set the tone for the meeting. 'Let's hear the echoes and find the heartbeat of hope', said one Indigenous woman, 'The power of optimism is in our

hands'. Another participant put it this way: 'What creates, what drives hope is actually a vision of justice, that something can actually change. The collaboration of women is important to that hope.'

There was the hope too that that such radical collaboration by a group of women leaders would bring a more collegiate style of leadership, challenging a world run by male leaders where militarism and conflict rules and where 2.4 trillion dollars is spent annually on arms. The impact of that spend and growing global conflict on climate change was never far from the surface. One participant pointed out how the conflict in Gaza has led to manmade famine, the pollution of soil and clean water, with half of all tree cover and farmable land destroyed and the contamination of coastal waters and soil. Another powerful intervention from Lebanon reminded us 'The fight for the future of our planet cannot be put on hold. Communities at war are further exposed to the impacts of climate disasters, food shortage and health crises. That's why our commitment to climate action cannot be delayed.'

So how to go forward after a meeting where there was talk of networks of friendship, of mutual support and of a new openness and trust?

Pope Francis gave the group his blessing at an audience in St Peter's Square. Perhaps just as significant was the image of Mary Robinson giving the leader of the Catholic Church a Project Dandelion badge, reminding him that the dandelion is a symbol of resistance, perseverance, potential, health and healing. Beside her stood a group of 'Dandelions of Faith', wearing their distinctive yellow wooden badges, all committed to going back home and getting on with the job.

And what of the new network that's been born, this 'three-legged stool of women, faith and climate'?

Its work will now begin. There's a flurry of activity to be organised with 2025 earmarked as a moment of auspicious opportunity with COP 30 marking 10 years since the Paris agreement was adopted with its target of limiting long term global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. There's also the 10th anniversary of the Laudato Si Encyclical and 2025 declared a Jubilee Year or year of reset in the Catholic Church. And then, of course, it's the 10th anniversary of the Sustainable Goals Agenda. Already there are plans for the women at Frascati to collaborate on renewable energy, on tree planting, on greening places of worship and pilgrimage, to mentor young climate champions and to speak out against fossil fuels and to share the stories of what women are already doing to fight climate change and protect nature.

But there's a sense too that this new collaboration is more than the joint activities of a gathering describing itself as 'a group of improper and difficult women making a

difference'. It was also a 'room full of people you'd like to be' – personal, powerful, with new friendships and alliances, committed to support and look out for one another.

It felt like a new journey in the right direction, because as Mary Robinson said, 'Where women lead, action follows.'

Wilton Park

December 2024

Summary

Women climate change activists from the global South, their counterparts from the North, young and older, from diverse faiths, faith-based NGOs, as well as secular organizations, together with male allies, came together in Frascati, Italy, for four days. For several among them, this was a journey which began over a year ago, when they were convened in Wilton Park, in the United Kingdom.

Candid, fact-based and rich experiential narratives and discussions around policies, cultures, as well as climate change realities, took place, in an intense working process. The simple goal was to explore how to collaborate more and better, to go further and faster, in attempts to race against time and old vested interest, to achieve the climate goals.

Information provided by participants via a survey undertaken ahead of the meeting confirmed the vast reach of these networks of women and their respective organisations, around the world. They also shared the extent of their ongoing climate actions across all themes of intervention from reforestation to recycling from disaster preparedness to advocacy against fossil fuels.

Participants explored radical collaboration opportunities as well as challenges. They challenged one another to come up with specific, doable and collaborative climate action priorities, including increasing the visibility of women-led climate action through documenting the various stories of cross sectoral collaboration (storytelling); facilitating collaborations around renewable energy and related policies; realising more opportunities for joint collaborations across their various institutions; scaling up existing tree planting efforts; greening houses of worship; and identifying and amplifying actions at key global policy advocacy moments (e.g. at the Conference of Parties/COPs). They spoke of the need for radical forms of collaboration, which recognise the extent, depth, and creativity of women's myriad forms of leadership in

climate change efforts, nationally, regionally and globally. To that end, a Global Network was launched, a number of specific follow ups were agreed to and participants volunteered to populate four Working groups to flesh out Mission, Strategy, Operations and Resourcing.

The entire meeting took a great deal of vision, planning and coordination would not have been possible but for the systematic stewardship and direction of Wilton Park's Alison Hilliard, with management support from Rachel Jewkes, and overall advisory guidance of Jean Duff. Together they formed part of a Steering Group composed of Husna Ahmad, Shahin Ashraf, Nicole Ashwood, Giulia Cirillo, Lorna Gold, Clare James, and Azza Karam (also serving as Rapporteur).

1. Building blocks of the journey towards the Frascati meeting and the launch of a Multi-Faith Climate Action Network

From September 6th to 8th, 2023, Wilton Park hosted the [Women Religion and Climate Forum](#). The meeting was in partnership with Global One, the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID), Partnership for Faith and Development (PFD), the International Learning Movement UK, and The Stirling Foundation. This historic meeting was prompted by a sense of the immediate prospect of a catastrophic climate crisis and calls for an urgent increase in the scale and impact of action to achieve carbon emissions targets and biodiversity goals.

Specifically noting that women are leading climate action at national and local levels, in both faith and secular contexts, the rationale for the meeting was that women's powerful influence and leadership is key to going further, faster on climate action. Furthermore, the siloed nature of climate action between the faith and secular 'worlds' provided validation for the Wilton Park meeting to focus on the urgent priority of greater collaboration on climate action, and particularly on scaling up women's leadership by drawing women of faith and women leading in secular contexts into closer collaboration.

The September 2023 Wilton Park Dialogue recognised the significant roles that women play as agents of climate change, and specifically how providing opportunities for women to participate in decision making, contributes to the development and implementation of efficient and long-lasting climate resilient policies. The Dialogue provided a safe space for in-depth conversations, among diverse climate activists – including male allies – from international institutions, indigenous communities, academia, civil society and the private sector, to promote such collaboration in

mitigating and adapting to climate change. Outcomes included identifying and planning specific upcoming advocacy moments to amplify the voices of women on climate action and achieving greater visibility for women's leadership culminating in a call for radical collaboration on climate action, among women-led faith networks and secular entities.

This Frascati convening, over a year later, brought together 51 women, young and older, leading diverse faith and secular climate action networks, with 5 male allies. The faiths represented included Baha'i, Buddhist, Brahma Kumaris, Christian, Hindu, Indigenous, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh. Countries represented included Cameroon, Canada, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Frascati also builds on much larger and wider conversations which have been gaining momentum since the [Vatican Joint Appeal process](#). The latter called for a framework of hope and courage within a narrative of human development which was to deliberately avoid an exploitative and extractive mindset, and which placed inclusion and human dignity at its core. Also taken into account were the recommendations from the Confluence of Conscience [high level leaders' meetings in Abu Dhabi](#) – at the COP 28 - which spelled out the commitment by all faith leaders to, among other things, champion equality, dismantle human-made barriers to ensure inclusivity, equal participation, and empowerment for all; and honour the threads of interconnectedness and interdependence of life, reminding us of a shared destiny.

Another important backdrop for the Frascati convening was the [17 Rooms](#) - hosted as a partnership between the Center for Sustainable Development at Brookings, and The Rockefeller Foundation (and other critical actors including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations), and serving as an experimental method for advancing the economic, social, and environmental priorities embedded in the world's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The partnerships and analysis in 2 of these "Rooms" – Room 5 and Room 17 – provided important learning on dynamics both around aspects of [women's leadership](#), as well as on climate change.

Perhaps most directly and deeply of relevance to the Frascati meeting, is the women-led Global Campaign for Climate Justice: [Project Dandelion](#). Co-Founded with the strength of moral conviction and extensive leadership experience of the current Chair of the Elders, climate veteran and a former President of Ireland – Mary Robinson -

Project Dandelion's ethos both informed and shaped many of the deliberations in Frascati.

The symbol of the Dandelion itself is meaningful not only for the organisation named after it, but for the endeavour to build a Network of multi-faith, women-led climate action-takers. Dandelions have many symbolic meanings, including:

- Resilience: Dandelions can grow in challenging conditions and survive in many different environments. They can also regenerate if their leaves and flowers are removed, similar to a starfish.
 - Hope and wishes: Blowing away the seeds of a dandelion is a universal activity associated with making wishes.
 - Healing: Dandelions have been used for thousands of years for their medicinal properties.
 - Transformation: The dandelion's transformation from a yellow flower to a white seed head represents change, growth, and the ability to adapt.
 - Spiritual enlightenment: In some traditions, dandelions are seen as symbols of spiritual enlightenment
 - Freedom: Dandelions symbolize freedom and the ability to let go of negativity.
 - Love: In Victorian flower language, dandelions symbolize love.
 - Faithfulness: Dandelions symbolize faithfulness.
 - Divination: Dandelions have been used as a tool to predict the number of children you would have.
-

The Frascati meeting recognised the common calls for action for, with and by women of faith, which were underscored by the various consultations. These included describing and elevating women-led climate solutions, raising awareness of the power of women of faith as agents of change to achieve climate and biodiversity goals, influencing political will by engaging women of faith at decision making tables, and as advocates for climate action (including the phasing out of fossil fuels), and facilitating the engagement of women of faith networks by secular campaigns in mass mobilisations for climate change. All through shaping, defining and committing to launch a Global Multi-faith, Women-led, Climate Action Network of Networks.

To which end, the Frascati meeting's specific objectives, were three-fold:

- 1** To explore what radical collaboration to scale up climate action and advocacy across faith and sectoral lines (could) look like in practice.
- 2** To discuss specific actionable next steps to scale up activism and advocacy.
- 3** To shape and launch a Global Multi-faith Women-led Climate Action Network of Networks.

2. The framing

[“Policy makers and secular working groups need to be reminded about the power of faith for change”](#)

Thus began an opening session which recognised that climate change itself provides the most profound sense of disorder for the world. Almost ten years since the Paris Agreement was adopted, the target of limiting long-term global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is increasingly elusive. The world is spewing emissions so fast that by 2030, a far higher temperature rise would be all but guaranteed. Brand new data from leading climate scientists show the remaining carbon budget to limit long-term warming to 1.5 degrees is now around 200 billion tons, i.e. the maximum amount of carbon dioxide that the earth's atmosphere can take if we are to have any chance of staying within the limit.

Average emissions of 40 billion tons of carbon dioxide a year is sure to result in the fact that the entire carbon budget will be reached well before 2030. Not only do global emissions need to fall nine per cent every year until 2030 to keep the 1.5 degree limit alive, but we are already living disastrous weather patterns which are resulting in significant loss and damage to lives, property and crucially, ruining our chances of securing the common good for generations. The United Nations Secretary General has notably called this ‘a moment of truth for climate change’ and warned that unless significant action is taken –which is still possible to take – we are “playing Russian Roulette with our planet”, and the world is surely on “the highway to climate hell”.

Those engaged in climate action have some awareness of how much work women undertake on and for climate action. It was over 50 years ago, that Vandana Shiva became one of the first ever activists to fight for environmental justice (in India), while raising global awareness about intersectional issues. Regarded as one of the world's most formidable environmentalists, she has worked to save forests, shut down polluting mines, expose the dangers of pesticides, champion ecofeminism, spur the

global campaign for organic farming and stand up to powerful giant chemical corporations. She is still battling to protect the world's seeds in their natural form (rather than the genetically altered and commercially controlled versions). Today, [Women Leading on Climate](#) maintain that women are 2.5 times more likely to demand that their governments take action, are 60% more likely to use their voice for good, and twice as likely to engage civically on the issue of climate.

Intersectional realities

Highlighting this background, the opening interventions also noted other intersecting realities. These include an estimate, based on an analysis of 27 pre-event surveys submitted by participants, that the reach of less than half of the women gathered in this very meeting, through their respective representative structures, and memberships, was approximately 73 million women. As examples (according to data from respective websites), the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) alone, is composed of 1903 Superiors General worldwide (organized within 36 regional constellations); the Salvation Army has over 1.7 million members worldwide (including soldiers, officers, and adherents); while the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University has over 8000 Locations across 110 Countries and more than 1 million daily students; and the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India has 2.9 Million Members in 18 States. The estimated number of women provided here is therefore partial, but it nevertheless underlines the dramatic spheres of influence which leaders of women's networks (both faith-based and secular) have.

Another intersecting reality is a concern that a clash of civilizations "may be rearing its ugly head" with extremist religious and right-wing political movements spewing forth rhetoric of hatred, xenophobia and threatening democratic processes on the one hand, while hardening attitudes and practices of autocracy on the other. The ongoing legacies of the industrial revolution, and specifically of colonialism, were underlined as causing concern among women of faith from the global South, especially given the erupting tensions, as well as outright armed conflicts, between communities and nations. But some maintained that colonialism was also identified as a feature of some climate change actions – referencing the Climate Action Fund as an example.

The power of faith

Vis-à-vis such realities, more features specific to the power of faith, were named. Specifically, the ability of religious leaders, faith-based NGOs, women's organisations linked to religious institutions, and religious doctrines, to motivate personal, grassroots

and community commitments, and to directly impact on behavioural changes needed to address the simultaneous and interdependent challenges.

The presentations acknowledged that in spite of women and girls being directly and mostly impacted by climate changes which substantially increased and compounded interrelated insecurities (including drastically reduced access to food, clean water, affordable healthcare, shelter, and peace, among other basic needs), women's voices in climate change policy making nationally and globally, remain generally underrepresented. In other words, 80% of people impacted by extreme climate changes are women, yet their influence is not commensurate.

The critical absence of women's experiences, insights and wisdom at the policy making tables dealing with climate and nature crisis is particularly marked, when it comes to women of faith. This is not due to the lack of extensive, in-depth, and myriad forms of actions and responsibilities, nor indeed the legacies of service, which women of all faiths demonstrate in dealing with the climate and natural crisis and their varied impacts. In fact, opening speakers representing governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, delineated how women of faith are valuable agents of change whose respective and collective work has been shown to deliver better environmental outcomes for the communities they are invariably rooted in, serving and working for. Moreover, the experience and expertise of women of faith is central to both articulating and deploying local expertise and is necessary to enhance the credibility of climate-change efforts, and their impact. Women generally deliver better environmental outcomes and solutions suited to local customs, many borne of direct experiencing of the dramatic effects of climate change on daily lives.

Impacted greatly, working actively, yet still under-represented

The underrepresentation of women of faith in policy making is not necessarily due to the lack of awareness of and engagement with religious leaders, which is exercised by governmental and intergovernmental entities. Indeed, [the Joint Appeal by faith leaders](#) at the Conference of Parties (COP) 26 was repeatedly noted as one of several milestones where governmental and intergovernmental structures received religious voices, advocacy, and practical commitments. The fact is that such engagement with and visibility of/by religious leaders and faith-based organisations in climate change fora, remains predominantly (albeit not exclusively) male. This is why there was a clear welcome of, and a call for, women of faith to breathe new life into the Joint Appeal, and, together, take it on board to help realise the commitments and actions urgently required at this critical junction of survival of our shared ecosystem.

Speakers acknowledged the differentiated impact of climate change on diverse groups of people, noting the distinction between participation and collaboration, and acknowledged the need for sharing of knowledge, skills and resources, to widen perspectives, deepen wisdom and expand the horizon of actions. Quoting an African proverb that ‘if you want to go far, go together’, there was a unanimous consensus that actions are needed which are doable, scalable and accountable, based on dialogue, scientific evidence. Such actions, speakers agreed, must be co-created with and between diverse faith traditions.

Thus, elevating women-led climate change efforts, to make a difference, “cannot be overstated”. Some of the speakers in the opening and framing presentations also pointed to the impact of women of faith exercising of strength, courage and perseverance enhancing the potential of the transformative effects of an initiative to launch the first, global, women-led, multi sectoral, multi faith, network of networks. Such a Network should issue Calls to Action for future COPs, and find creative and powerful ways to act on the care of all creation advocated for by religious and political leaders and secular institutions alike. This meeting provided the “extra mile” in all global discussions thus far, by insisting it was the whole of partners, involving all institutions, stakeholders, and interest areas, alongside women from all faith traditions. This was identified as the precise tipping point for climate actions to go further, and to do so, faster.

The **determination to harness the hope, wisdom and collective actions** of faith traditions in the fight against climate change was reiterated in the spiritual reflections shared. The spiritual power of faiths is far bigger than we can imagine, it was asserted. Moreover, faith can and does inspire, and often also enable, patience, in addition to the ability to “imagine the impossible”. All faiths underscore the fundamental interconnectedness, and indeed, interdependence, of all life, a fact which is central to the understandings of self, identities and social mobilization which religious institutions and organisations have historically realised and practice today.

2025 – A year of opportunity

2025 will be a year of multiple alignments, including being the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement, the 10th anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, the 10th anniversary of the *Laudato Si* Encyclical, as well as the Great Jubilee. The Great Jubilee in 2000 was a major event in the Catholic Church (held from Christmas Eve 1999 to Epiphany 2001), as a celebration of the mercy of God, and the forgiveness of sins. The Catholic Church declared an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy for 2015–2016, and the next jubilee year will be celebrated in 2025.

The opportunity for radical collaborations between women of faith, and among all environmental activists, therefore, is an auspicious one. So how do these opportunities present impetuses for radical collaboration within faith groups?

The first step, it was suggested in one of the reflections which was well received by all, is to consider the general perceptions of environment through the lenses of faith. We are called to wonder whether we may well be viewing one environment exclusively through the lens of another. Put differently, we see the dynamics of the natural world (the original 'climate' around us), only through a climate of fear. Rather than limit ourselves, the opening spiritual reflection shared the wording of chapter/Sura 94 of the Qur'an, where, in verse 6, it is noted that "with hardship comes ease". We should consider that the climate of our (faith-inspired) souls can weather the storms of life, just as nature renews itself with every season and every change. We were also rhetorically asked to consider, as the 13th-century poet, Islamic scholar, theologian and Sufi mystic, Jalaluddin Rumi reminds, what is to come may in fact be better than where we are today? These reflections underline the centrality of spirituality, and the certainty of hope, to all conversations, and actions.

3. Radical collaboration within faith communities

"We the Indigenous people consider the Forest our Supermarket. If we destroy our forest we will die from hunger and disease, because our medication too, is from the forest. Burning down the forest and cutting down the trees means that neither our livestock - on which we depend - nor ourselves, can either breathe, or be nurtured. Indigenous people are guardians and custodians of our forests. Ours is the traditional – and original - knowledge to protect, preserve and conserve"

In her rallying address which set the tone for the call for radical collaboration, former President of Ireland, Chair of the Elders, and Co-founder of Project Dandelion, the largest global, women-led movement for environmental action - Mary Robinson named the purpose of the moment: "I want to focus on how pivotal women of faith are...let us remember the scale of influence, as teachers of values... as the foundations of performative change. We are here together as a collective power".

Speaking of the greatest and most urgent issue of our time as "the nature and climate crisis", Mary Robinson laid down the gauntlet for the entire meeting. "We are not just witnesses" she said, "we are accomplices in this crisis of injustice... and gender injustice lies at its core". For why, she asked rhetorically, do women's efforts remain systematically underfunded?

Re-emphasizing the necessity of focusing on climate justice together, Mary Robinson underscored the need for some basic features of the radical collaboration required: radical connections, radical communications, long-view leadership rooted in science and reason, working with humility, taking into account different contexts, and determined to co-create with different generations.

“I ask you to reflect on the power you have. The power of co-creation through radical connection, radical communication and radical collaborations to shift the narrative, and grow our power to address the climate and nature challenges, because our best days are ahead of us” - Mary Robinson

The themes of **power**, and of **hope**, especially that realised by women coming together as agents of change, of peace, and of justice, motivated by their faith, were central to the call, the realities and the outcomes, of radical collaboration. The youngest environmental activist in the consultation, spoke cogently to the urgency of “being the last generation that can stop this crisis before it is too late”, but also, critically, to a sense of fear not only with the climate crisis *per se*, but with the simultaneity of crisis all young people face. The power exuded by diverse women united in a cause for environmental justice, as well as the unique ability of women to connect with nature, were highlighted as low hanging fruit which contribute to the success of radical collaboration.

“We have the capacity to reimagine, the capacity of have hope and the power to believe that we’re on the cusp of change and of resetting the global economy in a climate just way. Little decisions we take can have a butterfly effect.”

At the same time, a necessary aspect of the power inherent to radical collaboration is the ability and the means to engage men allies. Rather than seeing the demands of radical collaboration as an added burden on activists and organisations already facing respective and diverse challenges, the call for this form of partnership assumes an appreciation of the fact that the struggles are for a common heritage, and therefore demands smarter ways of collaborating.

No one survives alone: characteristics of some collaborations within faith communities for climate justice

“Earth stewardship is fundamental to our beliefs, and integral to our discipleship”

It is important to highlight that all the discussions attested, implicitly and explicitly, that women of faith rarely question the principle, or the need, for all manner of

collaborations. Collaboration seems to come naturally to all women of faith. “It would be extremely difficult to get anything done if we work only within our own groups. We need to collaborate with our own communities to serve their needs, and in order to do so, we need to keep collaborating with many others”. At the same time, it is clearly recognised that the needs far outweigh the human, financial and even the emotional resources available within any one community, or organisation/institution – no matter how large the size.

Advocacy for climate justice remains at the top of collaborative actions. At the same time, advocacy alone, was acknowledged to be necessary but insufficient, and sometimes, ineffective. A strong argument was made for going beyond decades of advocacy towards taking legal action in some cases, citing the urgency of the climate reality. Successful cases of legal advocacy include work undertaken by the Pacific Conference of Churches in New Zealand, which collaborated with the Indigenous communities, as the custodians of the river, to determine the legal rights for personhood of the River Whanganui. Ensuring that in March 2017, the Whanganui River became the first river in the world to be given the same legal rights as a human being. This successful legal intervention also underlines how nature as a sacred part of Indigenous culture and tradition, aims to protect the health of freshwater, and enables the maintenance of sovereignty and autonomy for Indigenous peoples.

On the other hand, some of the entities seeking to absolve themselves from blame for contributing to the climate crisis (either through their action or inaction), were noted to contribute to climate disinformation. In cases of climate litigation, the option is sometimes given to banks and businesses to claim to be themselves victims of disinformation.

Becoming better informed of collective litigation options as a means of impacting more and better, and becoming trained in this field, was posited as a value-added for enhanced agency by women of faith.

Scaling up collaboration around existing women led climate action strategies

“This gathering could not come at a more critical time as wars rage, as climate disasters grow more intense and as inequality deepens, the call for unity between faith based and secular networks has never been louder. Secular and faith-based movements share a profound responsibility to stand together against the global challenges threatening humanity.”

Participants shared information about their networks' ongoing climate-related initiatives across a broad range of efforts, sharing work by their respective organisations. These included Project Dandelion, Greenfaith, Laudato Si' Movement, UNANIMA, UNEP Faith for Earth, Faith for Our Planet, ADAMAH, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Interfaith Power and Light, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation, the Brahma Kumaris, the Seventh Day Adventists, Soka Gakkai International, United Religions Initiative, the Baha'i International Community, Global One, the Organisation of African Instituted Churches, Self Employed Women's Association, Eko Sikh, Muslim Girl, and the World Council of Churches, to name but a few.

Connectivity and inclusion

Speaking to partnerships more generally, community-based partnerships are argued to be more sustainable in the long run, since they tend to more closely correlate with expressed needs. Some argued that it is at the community level that businesses, or private sector entrepreneurs and entities, are relatively easier to engage, as compared to national and international levels. But even at the community-based level, questions about evaluating impact, efficiency of resource use, and scalability to match greater or growing needs, remain challenging.

Some good practice cited in more than one discussion was the need to secure connections between the grassroots and top-level action and decision-makers; indeed, ensuring that this is a target at the outset of planning work within diverse communities. The emphasis of this connectivity, however, requires a deliberate redirection of the focus on the most marginalised communities at national, regional and global decision-making fora. Indigenous people, for instance, are still a token and/or nominal presence in many important climate related discussions, despite their direct and even 'sacred' sense of the issues at hand.

Connecting the 'struggles' for justice for nature and climate with women and gender-related dynamics, was noted as "absolutely necessary". This involves increasing the confidence and skills for women to lean into leadership roles, and in doing so, to take responsibility for including other relatively marginalised voices within and among their communities. Experiences from different countries show that mentorships, especially within religious communities, are a helpful means, especially - albeit not only - for equipping young climate change advocates.

Standard bearers? Religions values and/or human rights...

Religious values can provide guidelines, both for due diligence measures, as well as to inform criteria for selection of partners with whom to engage. This does not mean that all the collaborations within religious institutions and communities are perfect, as evidenced by the harm done to some Indigenous communities precisely due to partnerships with extractive interests, which some religious institutions are either benefitting from, turning a blind eye to, and/or remain ignorant of. Religious values can provide insights and discussion points, for what could be more universally applicable 'red lines' in seeking collaborations. One of the points made in this regard is that "faith can give us the courage, and the hope, to believe that if one partnership does not work out or align well, then we can find others." Nevertheless, using human rights as an overall framework to discern the what, why and how of collaboration, is a good practice.

Whither the [male] leaders?

One of the challenges of intra- and inter-faith women-led collaborations is the lack of engagement from the largely male leadership among faith communities. Training of local grassroots religious and community leaders, as well as involvement of media in showcasing women of faith-led efforts, has been shown to encourage some of the male religious leaders to see the value added of supporting local grassroots women's efforts.

Providing capacities for women of diverse faith, and secular women-led climate efforts, to enhance discernment and learn from successful advocacy strategies - including identifying what collaborations may be unwise and how to help mitigate some of the pitfalls - continue to be needed. This also means learning how to hold public officials - not just religious leaders - accountable, since such spaces retain their own lexicon (language), can be deeply politicised, and legalistic, especially in countries with authoritarian regimes.

On resourcing

While the impact of small grants within faith-run collaborative endeavours can be significant, adequate financing remains a noteworthy gap. Long-standing developmental practice dictates the need to build local capacities to eventually wean dependence on external or traditional support (e.g. government, religious institutions, businesses). Many faith-based organisations also argue that rather than only focus on continuing to solicit more large-scale funding, a more holistic approach integrating in-kind support, cost-cutting efforts, creative means of short-term saving schemes

pioneered by some women-headed households, as well as targeting the most vulnerable first (e.g. those who need help just to survive), have proven to be effective in some contexts.

Also important in the funding/resourcing space, is what both women of faith and secular women are learning over time, which is to ensure that earmarked funding from donors (for example, to gender-based violence), is also used to tackle some root, or underlying causes, given the intersectional nature of the issues. Donors, it was argued, need to connect the dots, to offer resilience for climate rather than simply responding to impact.

An immediate practical action advocated for as part of resourcing, is to seek some form of ‘vetting’ or scrutiny, regarding the sources of investment of the funds of religious organisations, as a means of seeking “clean investments”. Requesting that respective religious organisations ensure that money is not going to fossil fuels, was named a low-hanging fruit of collaborative actions.

Telling the stories

“We badly need new stories to live by. We need to elevate something deeper, that has been lost, we need the kind of stories that faith communities tell over time ... to confront the endless stream of information and misinformation. We need stories that make sense to people, which focus on the solutions and not just the problems”

How did a grassroots religiously inspired women-led organisation in Cameroon succeed in securing the collaboration of businesses to support their capacity building efforts, and then have these businesses agree to review some of their investment practices? How did a global Christian-based Alliance succeed in upholding the importance of gender mainstreaming, including in climate related efforts, amongst a membership body that includes some of the most conservative perspectives on women and gender equality? How do religious leaders become equipped to serve as climate justice leaders, including in countries where the governments may not be amenable to tolerating such roles? How are bridges of knowledge and common advocacy being built between scientific communities and institutions, and religious ones? How have rural Muslim women in the North and Eastern parts of Kenya, become champions of climate sensitive practices? What are Indigenous customs and traditions which preserve our climate, and how can we work with them on climate change? The questions are endless. And all of them, and many more, have answers replete with nuance and wisdom. One often reiterated need: the stories need to be told and retold to wider audiences. The stories of how women are already shifting consciousness,

mobilizing across divisions, creating change, and changing attitudes as well as laws, need to be collected, and they must be shared.

4. Radical collaboration across faith and secular spaces

Spiritual reflection

“Rainfall is as wondrous as the creation of heaven and earth... yet we humans deceive ourselves into believing that material things give us peace and security. Religious holy days remind us that sharing what we have, with a view to respecting nature, so it may respect us back, is key to a sense of security How can we find joy when our hearts are breaking? Even with broken hearts, we can still love, still hope, still strive to build the world as it should be, and do even more...”

Story telling continued to be a running theme behind the ‘how to’ of collaboration across religious and sectoral lines, with grassroots women’s activism raising, time and again, the wisdom of Indigenous customs and traditions as game-changing for climate justice efforts. Strengths of radical collaboration including a simultaneity of the following: seeking to work with communities where they are at; harvesting customs and traditions of living and communicating while working alongside one another, as communities appreciative of common concerns; a relative sense of comfort with matriarchal cultures and women making decisions; the courage to be critical – and constructively so - with established educational institutions, including those related to/with religious, tribal, and religious leadership; and **working in an intersectional manner, due to a deep rooted conviction that all living beings and systems, are ultimately interconnected**. By working together across differences, learning to articulate injustices more powerfully, looking for solutions within respective communities, as well as insisting on more concrete and holistic recommendations and actions, are collateral outcomes.

Radical collaboration across diverse sectors also requires – and entails as outcomes – realising that religious and faith leaders are indeed trusted by many communities, but also **understanding that solutions are not only within any one religion, or religious community**. For instance, the *Laudato Si'* Encyclical of Pope Francis, is a Catholic manifesto to which a global organisation/movement (LSM) is dedicated (with more than 60% of their Animators being women incidentally). Yet this still requires ‘all hands on board’ to realise its call, which is intended for the whole of creation. Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals, even if owned and served by all Muslim or Hindu

or other religious communities, cannot be accomplished without systematic partnerships across the multiple spectra of institutions and peoples.

But radical collaboration for climate justice (and any other common interest) also necessitates **appreciating that not all religion is ‘all good’, nor ‘all bad’**. Being cognisant of how religion can be used as a tool to perpetuate oppression (and some religions originated and remain operative within colonial frameworks) – entails an implacable commitment to work with local religious institutions, organisations and communities, to equipping local faith leaders while also holding them accountable to shared values, to collaboration with secular entities, operating procedures, and **insisting that the ultimate standard of accountability, is human rights**. Radical collaboration also demands that in acknowledging the good power of religion, engaging with diverse women of faith, is neither optional, nor an add on to configure after the male religious leaders are gathered and mobilised: **working with women of faith alongside male religious leaders, is a *sine qua non***. In the words of Mary Robinson, “placing gender justice at the heart of the issues of nature and climate justice - and indeed every other issue - is a must... for it to be radical collaboration”.

“Radical collaboration requires a radical willingness to say, “I’m here to listen fully, with all my being, because I want to see how I can join this effort”.

The willingness to listen and to collaborate, is by no means new. What the discussions pointed to that **was** novel, however, is that radical collaboration is about “a **commitment to “mutually reinforce one another, and... to “lean on one another**. By learning from one another’s stories, a healing is made possible through sharing real-life stories”. The stories also “reach the hearts of decision-makers”.

This form of **solidarity** extends to sharing knowledge, data, building evidence, sharing language and strategies that worked (the stories), mindful presence in male-dominated spaces (and indeed insistence on supporting one another to be at these myriad male-dominated policy tables and meetings).

“Conflicts can’t disrupt our commitments to climate action, even when surviving may be the main priority...the fight for the future of our planet cannot be put on hold”.

Given the geopolitical background to the conversation, including the war in Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon, radical collaboration also entails the **courage to raise challenging issues** which may well **be against the status quo**, and also to **pause for moments of reflection in safe spaces**, so as to **have some difficult conversations**.

“The conflict in Gaza has seen man-made famine, the pollution of soil and clean water, the destruction of half of all tree cover and farmable land and the contamination of coastal waters and soil”

While divesting from fossil fuels is understood and agreed to be contentious and yet necessary for our climate, having difficult conversations also entails an acknowledgement of the “unfolding brutality involving militarism, which is killing all life”. Otherwise, the challenge was raised in a rhetorical question: “what happens when religion is hijacked by a minority, to justify atrocities which culminate in significant environmental damage?”

There was a consensus that “we are most effective when we speak authentically from a faith perspective”. At the same time, it is important to be **conscious of a dominant Christian-centric worldview** - one of the colonial legacies - which tends to be a feature of interfaith spaces. This also necessitates a more nuanced sensitivity to the beliefs and value-systems of other religions. **Multi-faith action is acknowledged to be both a complex and complicated endeavour. At the same time, as with many faith-based efforts, men dominate interfaith settings, discourse and spaces. All the more need to raise awareness about the strategic value-added of interfaith women’s efforts**, as these draw from the wisdoms of diverse faiths.

Faith-based representatives noted that their collective participation in climate related conversations, programmes, and in diverse fora, have contributed to shifting the discussion on funding among state parties, to be inclusive of the need for resources which mitigate transitions (to eco-friendly policies and procedures). Other examples of achievements of multi-religious radical collaborations around climate change were shared, including organising plenaries and exhibitions at the COPs which showcase diverse religious positions and contributions to climate change efforts, and offer opportunities to lobby governmental and business representatives; working to raise resources from within their own organisations, to enable them to serve as advisors to multilateral entities; providing in-kind support through offering meeting venues at little or no cost; training religious leaders to prepare for and respond together to climate related disasters; and contributing towards the realisation of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 in United States federal law (which aims to reduce the federal government budget deficit, lower prescription drug prices, and invest in domestic energy production while promoting clean energy).

Successful radical collaboration examples involving secular and multireligious actors include partnering with UNEP on initiatives at country, regional and global levels to equip religious leaders with the means to become climate change leaders; working with UNICEF and multi-religious coalitions to enable religious leaders to steward positive and transformative behavioural change for children in times of health crisis; success in securing funding from the private sector as part of the latter's obligation to Corporate Social Responsibility; working to build bridges between the world of science and leaders of faith; and working ecumenically on climate litigation for children's rights with the International Criminal Court (ICC).

A claim to serve as “prophetic voices” and a commitment to lead by example are also aspects of the radical willingness to collaborate and to communicate. Moreover, in spite of the urgency of the situation, faith-inspired actors typically have a relatively more long-term view of collaboration - and “having faith that we are **planting the seeds even without knowing the outcome**... as opposed to the ‘immediate gratification’ often hoped for”. To that end, **tapping into existing efforts**, rather than constantly seeking to start anew, especially given the wealth of initiatives already afoot, was also specifically identified as strategically wise (and cost effective). An example is the [Climate Map](#) as an already existing tool which need not be replicated (even though efforts to ‘map vulnerable’ communities tend to be repeatedly advocated for) but should have the faith-related efforts added to.

Similarly, **educating funders**, and having the courage to push back even when their resources may be sorely needed, are part of the strategic courage some spoke to. It is no coincidence that there is an intersection between nondemocratic and/or outright corrupt political regimes, and a deepening of the effects of the climate crisis. There is, therefore, a need to strengthen democratic thought and praxis, as well as democratic institutions.

There are two ‘schools of thought’ about radical collaboration between faith-based NGOs and non-faith based actors and organisations. One way of thinking believes it is necessary to make an effort to “meet the language” of secular actors. Another approach refuses to be “burdened with sanitizing our messages for secular organisations”. While these views are in tension, this does not necessarily translate into hostility in ongoing collaboration.

While raising women's voices and interests are common threads, radical collaboration across diverse sectors also entails **appreciating the strategic necessity of working ‘behind the scenes’**. Some spoke to ‘fronting’ their respective organisational

leadership (especially male) to advocate for the policies and/or practices that uphold women's needs and align with their visions, or making sure to fully brief, and train, members of formal delegations attending major international events, so that the wisdom required is shared by all, rather than retained by any one person or distinct group of experts.

Radical collaboration also demands listening, engaging, and seeking partnerships with youth. While the largest youth organisations in the world are actually faith-based (with the Catholic ones usually superseding others in organisation, size and ease of identification), youth movements, groups, and individual actors are powerful drivers of climate change mobilization all over the world. The tired cliché that 'youth will inherit this earth from us' was debunked in favour of a narrative that recognised that **youth are already critical counterparts in the struggle to save this planet**. Another critical nuance was mentioned by one of the participating organisations: youth in/from faith movements are often **a powerful antidote to the endemic patriarchy within religious institutions**. Some participants mentioned initiatives to provide youth with fellowships (which bring together young people from different religious backgrounds to jointly learn and reflect on working for climate change efforts) as well as mentorship by women of faith leaders. It was noted that young people from religious communities tend, by and large, to be "far more open to elevate women of faith...be keen on collaborating across religious lines and are relatively dynamic and creative in doing so".

Young people can point out the moral urgency which motivates religious leaders to change traditional norms (for example, in Pakistan, Kenya and Cameroon). But while religious leaders tend to understand the urgency of enacting environmental stewardship, **there is a need to continue the intergenerational and gender sensitive dialogues which clarify how these realities intersect, link this to the scientific data, and consider (and facilitate) the targeted lobbying and advocacy required with policy makers**.

The journey of, and towards, radical collaboration also requires pointing out some **cautionary points**. **Undermining the method(s) and tools of other parties, even those appearing diametrically opposed to deemed common interest(s), can work against the discernment and the respect that radical collaboration requires**. "We need to be open to the words, and the means, of those who oppose aspects of climate change we think are absolutely necessary...If we do not listen and observe, we risk neglecting opportunities for much needed dialogue(s), and for necessary critical self-reflection, all of which can strengthen our own efforts".

Last but by no means least, radical collaboration was spelled out in a manner that only seasoned women activists for justice, can do. **Far from merely challenging the status quo within the bounds of what is deemed acceptable norms and/or adherence to ‘the rules’, radical collaboration requires being “disruptive”, “difficult” and “improper”.** “An alliance of Difficult and Improper Women” was articulated in the plenary, to a chorus of nodding heads and warm smiles. In the spirit of honesty, courage and humour which this gathering exemplified, it is worthwhile noting that the organisers’ focus on securing what is “doable”, “actionable” and “scalable”, may well align with these characteristics of radical collaboration needed to save our planet.

5. A Global Multi-Faith Women-Led Climate Action Network

“All of us here understand that at this moment in humanity, we exist for a much higher purpose.”

The purpose of a proposed Network is to provide coordination and resourcing support to implementing radical climate action collaborations. Participants worked together to envision (dream) this Network, and from there define its scope, commitments and specific priorities. In the following brief overview, key features of the Network’s proposed characteristics are summarized, and the agreed upon action priorities to launch the Network are listed.

The Statement (shared in the Annex), captures an expression of “who we are” at the moment of the birth of the Network. A birth midwifed so well by women – and a handful of male allies – in what was described as a “revolutionary gathering”. It is important to note that this document is seen by the group as a work in progress and not a definitive statement.

Envisioning a Network

Setting up a Network requires dreaming together – or at least listening to one another’s dreams – of what climate change activists and policy makers alike, ultimately, aspire to see happen with this Network. To that end, a session specifically dedicated to ‘dream the Network’, yielded varied and rich inputs pertinent to seeding it, growing it, and using it to effect the changes needed to safeguard the climate.

Seeding the Network entails collecting stories of meaningful and inspiring women-led multi-faith and multi-stakeholder partnerships, preserving and archiving women-led Indigenous faith systems, as well as mapping women-led actors and organisations,

and enabling access to information and resources. Seeding the Network also requires “building and pouring into a river of hope and making it visible to the world” as women seek to teach and learn from one another, and members host regular check-ins either through virtual calls or a newsletter (or both). Being committed to the Network’s success, and espousing values such as solidarity, radical honesty, thinking outside the box, and looking out for each other are constant features of the seeding, growing and using of the Network.

Growing the Network included an aspiration to build a database of women led faith inspired climate action networks and initiatives, as well as developing a common mission and key messages (especially with COP 30 as a destination) to be shared with the world. This would also require both identifying advocacy priorities, as well as a media strategy which would lead to policy changes. Inviting secular CSOs – including academia, legal, media, Unions; youth, animal rights’ organisations, economists – and seeking to localise it by nurturing regional hubs, is also part of growing the Network

Using the Network to effect changes required developing approaches aimed at ultimately fulfilling peoples’ basic needs. In the process, the Network would build genuine relational connectivity, including by looking at difficult issues, and not only having difficult conversations, but creating spaces for radical voices and considering disruptive conversations which challenge structures and worldviews, as well as hosting and facilitating dialogues on reconciliation. Carrying out internal reviews of respective institutions, building mentorship programmes, learning to invest in relevant technologies, and seeking resources while being “mindful of what we put in as well as what we take out”, are all also part of using the Network to effect change.

What to avoid

The multi-tasking instinct most women take for granted, can also result in harm unto oneself and one’s mission - “we can be the essence of scatter: doing too much in too many directions”. Focusing on too many Sustainable Development Goals may give a façade of engagement and progress, but the outcomes could fall short of expectations and leave a trail of exhaustion for many climate activists, young and older. This means that another Network requiring several “add-ons” of work, is unwise. Instead, focusing the intentions and activities, on specific, doable and scalable actions, which enable respective Network members to link up to, and strengthen respective commitments, facilitate the work by “joining forces and resources”, and above all, by **harvesting knowledge, experiences and outcomes** - including through telling and documenting the stories of work done and being done together – makes strategic sense.

The emerging shape of the Global Multi-Faith Women-Led Climate Action Network

“We need core cohesive strategies. We need to articulate radical communication & collaboration with clear calls to action”

A Network designed to “build a collective strength”, rooted in (but not limited to) sister-to-sister connectivity, working as equals with male allies, is appealing. As is a vision which describes the Network as “holistic, inclusive and capable of transforming power structures or as a potent force to fight climate change”.

At the same time, a Network which recognises the harm done – and mindfully avoids – centuries of colonialism, and its lingering institutionalised forms of racism, sexism, classism and misogyny, is a *sine qua non*. Simply put: a Network “committed to **colouring out the [white] box**” and **colouring it with diverse women leaders**, including from the global South.

But the Network also **identifies and works with interconnected climate and gender policies at all levels**; and is **brave enough to seek to hold and nurture difficult conversations within its own safe space(s)**, which is also designed to be self-reflective (and constructively critical) of how we work within our respective organisations. All while being **mindful of the need for wellness and healing of its members**.

The Network is and will seek to remain deliberately multi-religious in its form, as well as the actions it takes. Jointly writing and submitting to seek resources, and deliberately not competing with its own members, but intentional in building on and supporting existing efforts.

The Network, while working remotely and cohesively, will adopt a methodology of outcome harvesting and using radical communication within and without. This will be designed with a view to bridging several divides, including the **disconnect between global work and grassroots women’s work**, and honouring the wisdom of all climate change related work led and enacted by women.

Commitments

Reflecting the general aspirations for the network discussed above, the Network members – including all those who gathered in Frascati – identified, discussed and agreed several individual commitments, which are also action points, albeit requiring different timelines, and internal discussion with their home institutions. It is important to note that COP 30 was identified as the first moment in time to which the Network members intend to leverage their outcomes.

- **Scale up** knowledge sharing, grassroots work, and the visibility of different generations and types of women’s work for climate justice.
- **Lift women’s voices and narratives globally, as it is holding its members accountable to one another**, with mercy and grace.
- **Profile the wealth of best practices**, particularly from the global South, and bring this wealth of stories to COP 30 governmental and non-governmental fora.
- Intentionally **bridge the wisdom of women of faith climate change activists with those of scientific background**, including science-backed behaviour change narratives and approaches. Thus breaking the silos between the world of research, media, marketing and science, art/culture through securing ongoing strategic learning exchanges with these communities.
- **Dismantle patriarchal structures**, and toxic masculinity mindsets and ways of behaving towards one another, including as women.
- and take **pride in the Network’s respective Stories as well as its collective one – the Story of us – built on** a holistic multi-faith awareness, as well as an awareness that misogyny is not limited to male behaviour, and therefore needs to be actively avoided and its causes among women healed.
- Shift **climate action funding** from one which is made available to react to emergencies, to one in which a wide range of donors rely on the Network expertise as they urge all who are managing financial assets (for example, banks) to be more aware, and accountable.
- **Train** its member organisations on the “how to” of taking **legal actions** for climate change using tried and tested methodologies.
- Offer its members to serve as **mentors and co-creationists** alongside younger women and men, while also harvesting both the wisdom of older women and men in the climate change fields, as well as the intergenerational knowledge.
- Share the learning about greening spaces of worship and religious pilgrimages.
- Investigate and understand the complexities of “clean investments” and “greenwashing”, while also appreciating the complexities thereof, so that the perfect does not become the enemy of the good.
- **Learn, document and share** the capacities of local communities to secure local resources and sustainability, as well as seeking long term financing from larger scale donor institutions.

Next steps

It was agreed in principle to launch a Network. Four Working Groups were proposed and populated by volunteers. These would be tasked with fleshing out the details of mission, values, strategy, funding, operations and governance. Suggestions from these will be developed over the next planning period. The current Steering Group agreed to submit a plan of action to the group. Meanwhile, two specific sets of initiatives were enthusiastically agreed.

1 Story telling, mapping skills and communicating

The Story Telling Working Group committed to develop a Series, entitled “*From Despair to Hope: Radical Collaboration For Climate Change*” to be written by the women and men who undertake the work itself. The stories will share common parameters, or criteria, which would enable comparative wisdom while highlighting the specific contexts and efforts. Each story will note the goal of the initiative, contrast this with the existing realities/challenges; spell out the drama, emotion or conflict at hand; emphasize what was “radically collaborative” as well as the tangible take-away(s) and the moral message; clearly include the writer her/himself’s own reality, and end with both a call to action and a note of hope. Shorter or abbreviated versions targeted to diverse media (traditional and social), would also be written, with a view to ensuring answers to three questions: Why now? Why you? And, what is unique about this story?

The initial set of stories will have the following titles and/or themes:

- *From despair to hope through faith and legal action (global)*
- *Throwing out the Waster and Gaining Mother Earth in Indonesia*
- *Women on the Frontlines of combatting climate change in Bangladesh*
- *The Blessings of Rain: How Women-led Radical Collaboration saved the lungs of Honduras, and*
- *Lady of Justice and the Ladies of the Adivasis Indigenous People of Sri Lanka*

There was also consensus among participants that the stories will provide living resources, so to speak, to a **mapping** of the respective and collective strengths of the Network members. The mapping itself was agreed to be a necessary tool to create, populate and regularly update. In turn, this led to an affirmation of the need to create an **online portal** which would serve to house these respective assets, as well as

provide opportunities for collating and sharing information and communicating and coordinating joint events (per the following points).

“Let’s not wait for COP to roll around every year – let’s make sure we are making the linkages with one another to discuss climate justice issues”

2 Greening

The Greening Environment Working group committed to the following priorities for cooperation:

Solar energy: Brahma Kumaris, a major producer of solar energy and the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA), who are providing solar power to women farmers and informal workers, agreed to explore possible synergies in India.

Tree Planting: EcoSikh has committed to plant 10 million trees. SEWA, Brahma Kumaris and EcoSikh agreed to explore joint collaboration (also in India).

Greening of Houses of Worship. Interfaith Power and Light (IFPL), ADHAMA, and 22 UK mosques discussed engaging with Eco Sikh to explore tree planting at houses of worship. IFPL further expressed an interest in advancing partnerships towards greening houses of worship overseas, in conjunction with others.

3 Joint advocacy

As noted earlier (see page 8), 2025 is a year of significant relevant alignments. A number of advocacy-related priority actions were agreed, including the following:

- Jointly exploring the presence of the Network, through its rich array of members, at key 2025 events and meetings, as alerted and advised.
- As of the writing of this Report, ongoing information sharing is already taking place at the COP 29, with a view to continuing and strengthening targeted advocacy at COP 30.
- Supporting the work of Faith for our Planet (FFOP)’s February meeting in Brussels, with the European Union, on the role of women of faith in Climate Action.
- Prevailing upon the governmental co-hosts of this meeting, to co-sponsor a Network convening at the March 2025 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW). The [2025 CSW \(the 69th\) will be a review of thirty years of the seminal Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), and it was thus deemed timely to showcase this unique women-led Network’s presence, vision, and

commitments, alongside governmental and civil society women's rights advocates.

- Engaging with the Laudato Si movement's tenth anniversary activities and initiatives.
- Coordinating initiatives around the review of the Paris Agreement's tenth anniversary.
- Securing presence and sharing relevant joint analysis at the multiple summits related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2025, including the Second World Summit for Social Development and the World Sustainable Development Summit.

6. Concluding reflections

[“We need to try to protect ourselves from maintaining the status quo”](#)

The goal of this gathering, which built on and collated efforts and wisdom, was, to put it simply, to explore how to collaborate more and better, in order to accelerate the achievement of critical climate goals. The specific objectives were three-fold: to explore what radical collaboration to scale up climate action and advocacy across faith and sectoral lines (could) look like in practice; to discuss specific actionable next steps to scale up activism and advocacy; and to shape and launch a Global Multi-faith Women-led Climate Action Network of Networks. The short conclusion is: fully achieved – and how!

The meeting harvested knowledge and experiences showcasing the extent and diversity of climate actions led by women of faith networks, as well as by women-led secular campaigns. The discussions provided rich soil, and plenty of seeds, for new partnerships and for specific collaborations among faith groups, as well as between faith and secular bodies. These ‘seeds’ require diligent supervision, facilitation, and support, to bear fruit. In turn, this underlined the rationale, the tasks, and the deliverables, required of the Network.

Substantively, the gathering honoured both the imperative, and the tact required, for candid conversations which ‘took the bull by the horns’. As an example, the theme of colonialism – and the importance of decolonising as a conscious state of mind and actions in, for and with the Network, was reaffirmed. “Colonialism started with the slave trade and its impact is still here. Today we still have the same systems of oppression...we cannot decolonise if we do not go to the root of the issues” .

Acknowledging together how history attests to the fact that some religions were part of the colonial project, and understanding the need for vigilance about assumptions that religions can work miracles, were not shied away from. The Network is called upon to be mindful that the women – and men – gathered to build, together, **not** repeat the same processes of exclusion and oppression. Rather, to “embody a model of what we want to see”.

The enthusiasm which entailed giving of time, sharing of wisdom, honesty, and offers to partner (including to house the Network), was plentiful, and moving. The last round of reflections included heartwarming reflections of gratitude for the selection of invitees, the organisation of the agenda, the setting of the breakout groups, logistics and more. A strong request was made to maintain, at the very least, the network of friendships established at Frascati, to continue to exchange good practices and to build radical collaboration. Above all, the gratitude and appreciation for the content of the presentations and the discussions, resonated with each and all.

Thanks to a journey that started well over a year ago in Wilton Park, and thanks to the hard work already achieved by so many women, and women-led efforts, vis-a-vis the urgency of the climate crisis, a turning point in strategic partnerships to save the climate has been achieved. In their joint words,

“We have a unique opportunity in a precious window of time to take meaningful joint action to help prevent the most extreme impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Together with the faith groups, institutions, movements, and organisations we represent, we want to transform societies, shape policies, and mobilise communities for the urgent action needed to address the climate and nature crises”

A poetic reflection by one of the participants concluded the meeting, and captured much of the best of the wisdom and spirit of this remarkable moments of sharing legacies, aspirations and hope.

Climate accomplice

The climate crisis
descends on mind
like rain falls on dry earth,
moral crisis longs for
monsoon of compassion.

A newborn tugs at Mother Earth
but she has been decimated,
ravaged by her children,
careless with lust for industry and expansion.

If you listen closely,
the earth tells us a story,
tarmac built over
landscape rich with nutrients.
Man enslaves the trees to his whim,
conquers forest and forages for meaning,
counting paper stacked in the dark,
extract truth from dead soil,
excavate moral fabric,
long unwoven.

Gaza gazes into smoke-soaked sunsets,
the land is ablaze, blistered,
buried beneath our conscience.
Indigenous populations forced to confront
brittle moral backbone.
Forests for food, plants, medicine,
claimed by hands stained with greed
Caretakers of nature, taken from.

Held hostage, we bear witness to
climate collapse,
accomplice to our earth's devastation.

We cannot sit in passivity,
we must recognise our power,
be active change makers,
rooted in ancient spiritual traditions,
to lean into the love we hold at our core,
to embrace the earth as both

mother and child,
our life-giving source,
now in need of our healing and care,
crying out for our time and attention.

Faith, an anchor,
for our journey
we are held to account by a higher power.
Our actions, hold divine meaning.

Words scattered in the space,
someone says
everything is underpinned by a story that deeply moves us.
What story will we write?

Reflect on the power you hold,
growing that power, she says.
Meditate with the voice inside you
which stresses hope and joy.
Healers and carers,
Can we honour each other
and the natural world?

In rooms with high ceilings,
we narrate stories of power,
the power of symbols,
we define womanhood,
Our nature for nurturing this earth,
which nurtures us.

The future is bestowed upon us,
a gift amid the chaos,
we are vicegerents of our destiny,
planting roots, firm and unmoving,
as the oceans rise and fall,
so too our moral commitment
to protect the earth crashes
with the waves,
bringing uncertainty to our shores.

We take courageous steps,
we open doors for women who are behind us,
and we walk through those held open,

by those who came before us.
We look to our elders, our ancestors
for guidance,
walking in their footsteps.

We stretch the earth to house our aspirations,
we build doors from scraps of tree and
water our capacity to dream.
We step into visions of new worlds,
allow ourselves a moment, to imagine,
what a different reality could look like.

How can we return to sanctity,
the space before we saw the dark?
How may we carve out new futures,
steeped in soul,
spiritual, moral conscience?
How can we serve the earth which has
long served us?
allowed us to experience great joy,
peace, fulfilment.
How may we imagine a world restored?

Zahra Leyla Ahmad

Global Multi-Faith Women-Led Climate Action¹

An expression of who we are at our birth

We are a network of women of faith and their allies, committed to radical collaboration for climate justice.

The climate and nature crisis represents a transformative chapter for all of humanity that is already being written. So far, the story is bleak. The formation of our network is a response to the urgency of now. We birth this network with the belief that a better ending to this chapter is not only possible but within our reach.

We already see transformation happening where women of faith are leading. We know our leadership is critical in securing a sustainable and just future—because it's already making a difference! United with other women-led campaigns across the world, we believe we can harness the power of billions of women to ignite global momentum for profound, lasting change.

We are not just a list of names on a shared spreadsheet; we want our connectedness to be grounded in a dedication to caring for one another within this multi-faith, global community. Therefore, we commit to looking out for each other, building relationships, standing in solidarity with each other's struggles, sharing stories, listening, and learning together - knowing that we will be stronger united in our mission than we will ever be apart.

We will lay aside any organisational, institutional, or individual competition. Instead, we will embrace solidarity, mutual support, and the understanding that success is collective and only possible when we uplift one another.

We recognise the deep, underlying causes of the climate crisis and other intersecting injustices, not just the terrible symptoms. While we must move swiftly and decisively, as the science demands, we seek to do so in a way that leaves no one behind.

We will work together in the active decolonisation of climate action and reject so-called solutions that replace one form of extractivism with another. We will commit to addressing not only environmental harm but also the underlying power structures that perpetuate inequality, violence, exploitation, and oppression.

¹ This document reflects the language and revisions proposed by participants. Because of time limitations, it was agreed that the document would remain a “working draft” and serve as guidance to the newly established Working Groups.

We have a unique opportunity in a precious window of time to take meaningful joint action to help prevent the most extreme impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. Together with the faith groups, institutions, movements, and organisations we represent, we want to transform societies, shape policies, and mobilise communities for the urgent action needed to address the climate and nature crises.

We will take an intersectional approach, centring voices too often still excluded or ignored in climate decision-making and action, particularly those of women, people from the Global South, local people, Indigenous Peoples, and youth. As women of faith and their allies, standing at the crossroads of spirituality and social responsibility, we will hold climate decision-makers accountable, while also supporting them to accelerate climate action—and cheering them on when they get it right.

We will replicate this way of being in our own institutions, communities, and countries.

We will work together to grow our network of friendship locally, nationally, and globally.

This collaboration is born out of a desire to build trust between us. We won't get everything right and we won't have all the answers. This is, and will continue to be, messy and imperfect. Yet, this commitment is an expression, in this moment, of our willingness to do all we can together anyway.

Finally, this written expression is just the beginning. As we grow together on our journey as a network, our collaboration will evolve, deepening and developing with every step we take.

[Azza Karam, Lead Integrity](#)

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