

**A Statement to the Government
on the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the Paris Agreement
for COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland in November 2021
from Religious Leaders and Interfaith Groups
of Aotearoa New Zealand**

Humanity must right now confront the greatest moral and spiritual challenge in its history to date. As the recent United Nations IPCC Assessment Report, AR6, concludes, there is no hope of limiting global warming to even 2°C if we do not *commit to effective action now*. Already in our closest geographic region the disastrous consequences of a near 1.2°C rise in average global surface temperature are threatening the viability of more and more low-lying Pacific Island nations.

As people of faith seeking to respond to this challenge we draw comfort and insight from the rich traditions and teachings of the many religious communities now present in Aotearoa New Zealand. From each we see powerful invocations for all to care deeply for the natural world alongside caring for all of humanity. Many of the world's religions, including Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism and Baha'i have urged the need for environmental protection and conservation. Key to religious teaching is the understanding that sustainable and harmonious relationships between all of humanity and nature is not merely an abstract ideal but rather a comprehensive guide for living justly and walking gently upon the earth.

We are mindful also that our religious traditions have much in common with understandings central to Te Ao Māori. We acknowledge respectfully that through the teachings of traditional karakia the natural world is understood to be of sacred importance; that through the invocation of whakapapa comes the understanding that everything and everyone within Te Ao Whānui is interconnected and that through the shared responsibility of kaitiakitanga we accept that it is the duty of all humankind to care for the oceans and the earth and all who dwell therein.

Tragically, it is our collective failure to heed either these religious and indigenous teachings, or indeed to heed the warnings long given by climate change scientists, by environmental activists or by political figures deeply attuned to the perils of climate change, which now results in an unmitigated global crisis.

At this time therefore we urge the Government to consider anew the benefit of incorporating the age-old teachings and values of religious and indigenous communities in your response to the Paris Agreement.

Religious and indigenous communities, who act collectively, who care for humankind and the environment, and who show compassion especially in times of crisis and distress, now have a significant role to play.

We recognise the enormity of the task, especially for rich and powerful countries whose models of extraction, production, consumption, and waste are causing the current environmental breakdown, including climate change, loss of biodiversity, rising sea levels, ocean acidification, water and air pollution, soil depletion, habitat destruction and mass extinction of many living organisms. We abhor the huge disparities in wealth, consumption and carbon emissions that continue to exist globally and in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Specifically we call on the Government to engage the climate change kaupapa by:

- Committing to the strongest possible Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to the COP26 climate negotiations, in order to align the 2022 -2030 NDC with a 1.5°C limit to global temperature increase. To do this, our nation must aim to achieve at least a 50 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and aim to achieve net zero emissions earlier than 2050.
- Committing to include people expert in the climate change issues from within religious and indigenous communities to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at all international climate change forums. Respect for Te Tiriti o Waitangi requires equitable Māori/non-Māori partnership relationships to be reflected in all aspects of representation and leadership associated with bodies established to work on these matters into the future.
- Actively advocating for those island nations of the Pacific already suffering from sea level rise and other hugely destructive direct climate change impacts.
- Ensuring a Just Transition by giving attention to measures such as: assessment of distributional inequities; policies to address unequal impacts and ensure income support; support of workers in high emissions sectors to retrain for roles in a zero-emissions economy.
- Supporting citizens disadvantaged by the climate crisis, through changes in government policies on tax, agriculture, energy and transport, and greatly increased investments in green and sustainable technology and practices.
- Ensuring that any use of purchased off-shore credits for mitigation is a “last resort” measure and is robustly verified for environmental integrity.
- Making the transition to a non-exploitative and green economy a top priority, the transition supported by science-based targets that are aligned with a healthy, resilient and zero-emissions future.
- Funding education on climate transitions on a par with public education for the management of the Covid-19 pandemic, providing a recalibrated system of education which will prepare young people and adults in a process of life-long learning for participation in a regenerative economy.
- Working with all those who are already actively educating people about climate change and climate action, including indigenous and faith communities.
- Taking a principled approach to responsibility for historic emissions. In achieving high standards of living, Aotearoa New Zealand has emitted more carbon per capita than most other countries. We therefore have a greater responsibility to reduce emissions as well as greater capacity to reduce emissions. This goes along with providing support for ‘developing countries’ to develop further through low emissions economies.

A Tiriti/Treaty of Waitangi Relationships Framework must guide the new NDC and all other aspects of response to the climate emergency. Te Ao Māori offers an integrated worldview which supports the whole-of-systems approach needed for a regenerative economy. Tangata Whenua-approved applications of tikanga will ensure that agreed standards provide the protection required for ngā taonga tuku iho, te whenua and te taiao (heritage, land and nature) This will have a positive impact on the restoration of ecological balance and on harm reduction levels in particular.

Faith communities are committed to putting energy into the task of restoring our relationships with the natural world in ways that work. Faced with the existential threat inherent in the climate crisis, we will draw on time-tested methods within our traditions, such as practices of renewal and behaviour change, renunciation, living simply and caring for each other, to guide us in undertaking this sacred work of restoration together, Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti.

We therefore call on the Government to find the moral and political courage that is required to engage this kaupapa fully on our behalf, both at home and at COP26 in Glasgow.

Kia hora te marino	May the seas be calm
Kia whakapapa pounamu te Moana	May the shimmer of summer
Kia tere te kārohirohi	Glisten like the precious greenstone
	And dance gently across our pathways

(as together we seek now to preserve and protect the most sacred gift of all,
the gift of all of life on the earth.)

The Statement was prepared jointly by members of the Religious Diversity Centre together with a specially commissioned workgroup of persons well versed in matters of Climate Change:

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The Statement to the Government on the NDC to the Paris Agreement for COP26

has been endorsed by the following Religious Leaders and Interfaith groups: (To 30 September 2021)

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Paddy Payne, Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs

The Most Reverend Philip Richardson, Archbishop, Anglican Church Aotearoa New Zealand Polynesia

The Right Reverend Ross Bay, Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Auckland

The Right Reverend Dr Eleanor Sanderson, Assistant Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Wellington

The Right Reverend Justin Duckworth, Bishop, Anglican Diocese of Wellington

The Reverend Prince Devanandan, Anglican Church, of Aotearoa, New Zealand, Polynesia

Bishop Richard Randerson, CNZM

Cardinal John Dew, Catholic Archbishop of Wellington

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The Reverend Andrew Doubleday, President, Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Right Reverend Hamish Galloway, Moderator Elect, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Apotoro Takiwa Kereama Pene, Te Haahi Ratana

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Ibrar Sheikh, President, Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand

Sheikh Rafat Najm, Al Hikmah Trust

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The Hawke's Bay Interfaith Council
The Interfaith Council of Nelson-Tasman
The Palmerston North Interfaith Group
The Tauranga Moana Interfaith Council
The Waikato Interfaith Council
The Wellington Inter-Faith Council
The Dunedin Abrahamic Interfaith Group
The Wellington Abrahamic Council of Jews, Christians, and Muslims
The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Committee for Interfaith Relations
The Religious Diversity Centre Trust Board