



## **1,900 UISG Superior Generals mobilise for COP27 and COP15:**

**“The voices of the most vulnerable to be at the centre of the global debate”**

*In the run-up to the UN summits, the Statement “Sisters for the Environment: Integrating Voices from the Margins” is launched in Rome on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.*

The International Union of Superiors General (UISG) asks to “integrate the voices of marginalised communities in the global debate concerning the environment”, representing over **600.000 Catholic Sisters** who work in the field of healthcare, childcare and the fight against hunger. It does this through the Statement “**Sisters for the Environment: Integrating Voices from the Margins**”, launched on **Thursday, November 3<sup>rd</sup>** at the UISG headquarters in Rome, Lungotevere Tor di Nona 7, with the support of the Global Solidarity Fund (GSF). The presentation of the Statement was livestreamed on the official YouTube channels of UISG ([www.uisg.org/it/youtube-channels](http://www.uisg.org/it/youtube-channels)) in four languages: English, Italian, Spanish and French.

“It is necessary to **listen carefully to the voices of those affected by environmental disasters** - the text states - both in recognition of their dignity as human beings and, with a pragmatic approach, to learn from their resilience. Those most vulnerable must be integrated as key actors within institutional frameworks, ensuring that their voices are central to the global dialogue for change and not relegated to peripheral and isolated advocacy. In particular, the suggestions of indigenous communities to stop or modify projects affecting their lands must be taken on board, ensuring that the expert opinion of communities is part of efforts to mitigate climate change and the collapse of biodiversity”.

Two other key points of the document concern the need **to integrate responses to climate change and biodiversity loss**, recognising the interconnected nature of ecological challenges, and to **connect care for the environment with care for the weak**, rejecting the anthropocentric vision 'at the root of the most destructive consumer habits'.

Inside the Statement is the call for women religious to "act quickly to halt the collapse of biodiversity, ensuring that, by 2030, at least half of the Earth and oceans become protected areas, restore devastated ecosystems and reduce global dependence on fossil fuels". But also the call to '**reach global consensus on the Fossil Fuels Non-Proliferation Treaty**, and sign the agreement of a new global framework for biodiversity'.

On the one hand, the declaration addresses the current emergency by identifying COP27 on climate change and COP15 on biodiversity as essential opportunities to reverse the trend that is destroying the Earth. On the other, it expresses the deep-rooted and faith-driven vision for ecological conversion that has inspired the sisters' mission for decades, and still continues around the world.

**Five stories have been chosen to recount the commitment of Catholic Sisters** on the front line to safeguard the planet: Sister Anne Carbon in the Philippines; Sister Jyotisha Kannamkal



in India; Sister Nathalie Kangaji in the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas (in English

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas) and Sr Iraci de Fátima Cirino dos Santos in Brazil. From working alongside the indigenous Subaanen people, threatened by mining projects, to working to ensure education and support for the most vulnerable communities. From legal assistance to ensure that multinational cobalt companies respect the environment and local populations to lobbying for the allocation of funds to support low-income countries for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

*"The essence of this declaration is based on the global experience of activism and advocacy made with the Sowing Hope for the Planet campaign," said Sister Patricia Murray, UISG Executive Secretary. "Born in 2018, this campaign has become a driving force within the Laudato Si' Movement, promoting a multitude of initiatives and good practices implemented by the sisters and their partners in response to the Pope's encyclical letter."*

During her speech, the coordinator of 'Sowing Hope for the Planet' **Sister Sheila Kinsey** illustrated some of the results achieved through networking: *'We have collaborated with land conservation groups to preserve native seeds, mitigate damage from mining, plant trees for reforestation, cultivate community gardens and protect the land and land rights of indigenous peoples. With a focus on water issues, the Sowing Hope for the Planet networks have promoted access to clean water, raised public awareness on issues of pollution and water scarcity, advocated for legislation to protect freshwater sources, secured wells and pipelines for communities with limited access to clean water, and worked on projects to clean the world's oceans.'*

*"As the future of our Planet hangs in the balance, we know that reaching the tipping point of change requires all people of goodwill to work together across borders and identities, setting aside differences to defend our common home."* This was the final appeal of **Sister Patricia Murray**, who emphasised that the declaration embodies this spirit of cooperation that the sisters seek to promote, building on the collaboration between UISG offices, partners and funders.

The event was also attended by **Sister Mary John Kudiyiruppil**, UISG Deputy Executive Secretary; **Chiara Porro**, Ambassador of Australia to the Holy See; **Maria Dolores Sanchez Galera**, Coordinator of the Research and Reflection Unit of the Dicastery for the Service of Integral Human Development; **Neil Thorns**, CAFOD Advocacy and Communications Director; **Josianne Gauthier**, CIDSE General Secretary; **Catalina Hinojosa Lopez**, co-coordinator of the Agriculture and Justice Village of The Economy of Francis; and **Sister Jean Quinn**, Executive Director of UNANIMA International, who will be in attendance at the COP27 summit, becoming a voice for the voiceless and bringing new hope for a more sustainable future.

*Rome, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022*

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