

## **IF20 Contributions to COP 30 Global Ethical Stocktake**

Since 2014, a number of specialists who adhere to major world religions have worked together through the G20 Interfaith Forum Association (IF20) to contribute ethical and values perspectives to issues on the agenda of the G20 group of countries – including climate change and disaster relief. They have participated in webinars, drafted policy papers, and been a part of the annual forum for high-level dialogue. On August 10-14, 2025, the IF20 convened in Cape Town, South Africa, to engage a diverse gathering of religious leaders, faith-based actors, academics, and representatives from international organizations and governments in dialogue on these topics -- within the overarching theme of “Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainability” adopted by the G20 South African Presidency.

A central topic for the 2025 G20 host, South Africa, and the IF20 was preparations for and responses to natural disasters, linked in many ways to the changing climate. In parallel, members of the IF20 Religion and Environment Working Group helped develop two sessions for the Forum program. In this context they considered how best to align their IF20-related responsibilities to support the COP30 Global Ethical Stocktake (GES).

Specific session discussions primarily addressed two of the GES questions: firstly, what traditions, histories, or practices (cultural or spiritual) from your community teach us to live in greater harmony with nature? And secondly, considering that we need to guarantee diversity in the collective, how can we mobilize more people, leaders, corporations, companies, and nations to support just and ethical changes in combating the climate crisis? What ideas and values could inspire us in this mission?

What follows is a brief description of the two sessions, including a listing of discussion leaders and the number of participants, as well as the ideas and values emphasized during the discussion.

### **Ubuntu Meets Talanoa**

The session titled *Ubuntu Meets Talanoa: A Conversation about the Most Vulnerable Populations Affected by Climate Change and Learning from Different Examples of Traditional, Cultural and Indigenous Practice* addressed the question: What traditions, histories, or practices (cultural, spiritual) from your community teach us to live in greater harmony with nature?

Ubuntu (“I am because we are” -- a traditional concept from Southern Africa) and Talanoa (a traditional emphasis in the Pacific Islands on inclusive and participatory dialogue) originate from different geographical and cultural contexts, but they share some key principles that can be seen as converging or meeting in spirit: interconnectedness and shared humanity; a focus on community and collective understanding; and a respect for Indigenous knowledge and worldviews. This conversation about the most vulnerable populations affected by climate change recognized that individuals are part of the whole and reflected upon how the values from our faith traditions can inform policy and action on climate change. This session included ideas and examples of leadership from traditional and indigenous communities, with a particular focus on the Southern African experience.

The discussion was co-moderated by Romanna Remor (Roble del Sur Foundation, Brazil) and His Majesty King Bongwe II (Africa President, International Association of World Peace Advocates, South Africa). The issues were launched by David Muneme (Board Chair, Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute; Programs manager, Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa, Kenya); Melanie Barbato (Coordinator, Mission and Interfaith Centre, Pasifika Communities University, Fiji); Bhekinhlanhla Sibisi (President, AAFIS, South Africa); and Francesca de

Gasparis (Executive Director, South Africa Faith Communities' Environment Institute). There were 25 participants, mostly from African and European countries.

The discussion emphasized that:

- 1) Indigenous and traditional concepts like Ubuntu and Talanoa can inspire climate action and bring more (and more diverse) people, perspectives and practices to climate initiatives.
- 2) These concepts are not just add-ons but can transform the basic approach to policy because they locate action in a holistic nexus of accountability (including to non-human life and even the whole cosmos).
- 3) These concepts belong to their communities, and the communities should be included in all parts of combating the climate crisis.
- 4) These concepts are embedded in holistic worldviews, and traditional and indigenous knowledge systems can offer early warning systems for climate related disasters, as well as contribute to more sustainable practices, for example in construction and agriculture.
- 5) Mobilizing people to combat the climate crisis requires “a bigger language”, and Ubuntu, Talanoa and similar concepts drawn from religious traditions are an important part of this.

### **Theology and Advocacy in Action**

The session titled *The Impact of Theology and Advocacy in Action: The Examples of Laudato Si', Al Mizan* raised the question: What traditions, histories, or practices (cultural, spiritual) from your community teach us to live in greater harmony with nature? The session particularly considered Christian and Muslim practice, and the resultant discussion addressed the questions: how can we mobilize more people, leaders, corporations, companies, and nations to support just and ethical changes in combating the climate crisis? What ideas and values could inspire us in this mission?

Prof. Husna Ahmad OBE (CEO of Global One 2015) moderated this session. Discussion launchers included Azmaira Alibhai (Faith & Ecosystems Coordinator at UNEP in Kenya); Dr. Mohamed Elsanousi (Executive Director of the Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers); Mushra Hartley (Global Operations Manager at the International Emissions Trading Association in South Africa); Merylene Chitharai (Youth Coordinator & Professional Architectural Technologist at Religions for Peace South Africa & African Council of Religious Leaders in South Africa); Grace Chilongo (Director of Youth Empowerment and Environmental Management in Malawi); and Immanuel Mwendwa Kiilu (Eco-Faith WG CYMG UNEP). An additional twenty-two individuals participated in the session, representing Brazil, Fiji, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Lithuania, Qatar, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Zambia.

The session explored how theological frameworks like Laudato Si' and Al Mizan relate to climate action advocacy, including the efforts of religious leaders and actors to address climate change through UN COP meetings and numerous other settings. It highlighted how faith actors and leaders can work to ensure no one is left behind in their advocacy against the triple planetary crisis—climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Participants emphasized the significant role of women and youth faith actors in influencing the balance of climate and politics.

The dialogue yielded the following key ideas and actions:

- 1) Use interfaith collaboration to activate theological positions from each religion to support climate advocacy.
- 2) Ensure meaningful youth participation through intergenerational collaboration.
- 3) Address the disproportionate negative climate impacts on women through targeted programs and recognition of their decision-making power.
- 4) Combine education with practical action by integrating theological climate teachings in schools alongside food security and community gardens
- 5) Build evidence-based religious leadership where inspiring statements are backed by institutional work and real-life examples.
- 6) Learn from marginalized communities through humble, mutual respect rather than imposing solutions.
- 7) Hold governments accountable through unified interfaith collaboration that leverages religious institutions' permanence compared to political structures.
- 8) Influence change at the household level through personal accountability, sustainable practices, and intentional parenting that shapes the next generation

## **Conclusion**

The climate and environment sessions convened at the 2025 G20 Interfaith Forum in Cape Town represent a significant contribution to the COP30 Global Ethical Stocktake. Through dialogue involving 54 participants from diverse geographical, cultural, and religious backgrounds, these sessions surfaced critical insights about the role of faith traditions and ethical frameworks in addressing the climate crisis.

The conversations highlighted both the strengths and limitations of interfaith engagement on climate issues. Indigenous and traditional concepts, such as Ubuntu and Talanoa, offer transformative potential for climate policy by situating human action within holistic webs of accountability that extend beyond anthropocentric concerns. Theological frameworks such as *Laudato Si'* and *Al Mizan* provide grounding for sustained advocacy and practical action at multiple scales, from household practices to international policy engagement.

Moving forward, action points identified during these sessions point to effective interfaith climate engagement: activating diverse theological positions through collaboration, ensuring meaningful participation by youth and women, grounding inspiring statements in institutional commitment and practical examples, learning humbly from marginalized communities, holding governments accountable through a unified religious voice, and recognizing that transformation begins at the household level.

The IF20's contribution to the Global Ethical Stocktake demonstrates that religious communities possess some unique resources for climate action—permanence beyond political cycles, moral authority rooted in ancient wisdom traditions, and networks that reach into communities worldwide.