

Cop28 and the eco-sustainable contribution of the International Union of Superiors General

Cop28 - environment - religions - ecological transition - catholic women congregations - International Union of Superiors General - sustainability education

The participation, for the first time, of the *International Union of Superiors General* (UISG) in the twenty-eighth *United Nations Climate Change Conference* (Cop28), held in Dubai from 30 November to 12 December 2023, validated the active contribution of women's congregations in the dynamics of defending the ecosystem.

On the occasion of the international environmental summit, the significant role of religious communities in the fight against the climate crisis was also confirmed by the establishment of the first "*Faith Pavilion*", destined to host conferences and debates not only between the representatives of the various religions, but also between them and the scientific community, political leaders and other civil society actors in the search for and sharing of strategies that can contribute to the achievement of the main objectives set by Cop28, that is to say: supporting developing countries in responding to the effects of global warming; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; establishing a roadmap to accelerate a fair, orderly and equitable energy transition and drastically reduce the use of coal, gas and oil.

The participation and work of the *International Union of Superiors General* appears to be part of this action oriented towards unity, co-responsibility and a common commitment to safeguarding biodiversity. In particular, Cop28 was an opportunity to represent its environmental advocacy in the global debate on the climate emergency and to put forward solutions solutions able to: - support a holistic approach to ecological transition; - integrate care for the environment with care for people, declining an anthropocentric vision that supports consumption models not inspired by sustainability criteria; - integrate the demands of the marginalised communities most vulnerable to the effects of climate change within institutional and leadership frameworks.

In order to promote an *integral* and *inclusive* approach in the realisation of the goals of eco-sustainable development, the *International Union of Superiors General* has, in fact, already been engaged for some time in planning and implementing environmental education projects both within its own faith communities and in the local communities in which they operate. This is in order to identify and support religious

itineraries and life practices that, inspired by the moral and ethical values founded on the doctrine of the Catholic Church, can actively contribute to the development of network actions oriented towards the affirmation of the principles of integral ecology.

This is what emerges from the Declaration “*Sisters for the Environment: Integrating Voices from the Margins*” that the *International Union of Superiors General* presented as part of the “*Sisters for Advocacy*” project. The document aims, on the one hand, to illustrate some of the initiatives and good practices that the Catholic sisters have implemented and still propose to implement at the local and national levels within the framework of the campaign “*Sowing Hope for the Planet*” and, on the other hand, to create a platform through which to outline the principles, methods and guidelines for a systematic and permanent change that can ensure a more sustainable, just and inclusive future.

In the fulfilment of this mission geared towards caring for the common home and in line with the goals of Cop28, the *International Union of Superiors General* has thus renewed its commitment to timely and coordinated actions to counter the effects of the climate emergency and to projects and awareness-raising campaigns that can inspire their communities to use sustainable environmental practices, such as saving energy, using renewable energy, recycling consumables and reducing carbon emissions. Through partnerships with religious groups, governmental institutions and scientific authorities, the *International Union of Superiors General* also intends to support models of participatory, transparent and accountable governance of natural resources in global advocacy spaces, bringing to the fore a variety of eco-sustainable perspectives that are also able to integrate vulnerability into leadership and decision-making processes through the promotion of a culture of solidarity and encounter.

The active contribution to the ecological transition of the *International Union of Superiors General* denotes the value of the spiritual dimension of women in affirming and implementing an ethic of care and responsibility towards creation, and shows the benefits of their leadership in defining models of social and environmental growth that are in the interest of the common good.

Source: <https://www.uisg.org/it/news/UISG-Sisters-at-COP28-to-bring-marginalized-voices-into-the-centre-of-the-global-dialogue>

Caterina Gagliardi

UISG Sisters at COP28 to bring marginalized voices into the centre of the global dialogue.

Press release

<https://www.uisg.org/en/news/UISG-Sisters-at-COP28-to-bring-marginalized-voices-into-the-centre-of-the-global-dialogue>

Rome, 7th December 2023 - Integrate climate action with a holistic approach to tackling biodiversity loss, pollution and other environmental challenges; integrate care for people and our planet, rejecting the anthropocentric vision that underpins habits of destructive consumption; integrate vulnerability from the margins in leadership and decision-making, ensuring the voices of those most affected by environmental breakdown are at the centre of conversations on resilience and recovery. These are the key points that the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) – numbering 1,903 members from 97 countries, who represent over 600,000 Catholic Sisters worldwide – brings to **COP28, the UN Climate Change Conference** underway in Dubai until the 12th of December.

Catholic Sisters on every continent are engaged in environmental action and advocacy, on the frontlines of a movement to shape global development conversations around the needs of local communities. In November 2022, supported by the **Global Solidarity Fund**, UISG launched **Sisters for the Environment: Integrating Voices from the Margins**, a statement expressing the Sisters' deep-rooted, faith-driven vision for ecological conversion. This statement outlined the priorities that have guided UISG's environmental advocacy in 2023, including its Sister-led dialogue on the environment, roundtable discussions with the Holy See diplomatic corps, and engagement with new partners, culminating in its first-ever representation at a COP summit.

"UISG is at COP28 to explore how we can contribute to a fruitful exchange of perspectives, ideas and opportunities for collaboration between local communities and global decision-makers," explains **Sister Maamalifar Poreku, Coordinator of UISG campaign Sowing Hope for the Planet.** *"As Pope Francis reminds us in Laudato Si', 'We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental'. This is why, at UISG, we believe in a human-centred approach to tackling the climate crisis: we want to see the people most affected by climate change directly influencing decisions regarding resource allocation, and particularly financing. UISG is committed to drawing on the deep-rooted engagement of Catholic Sisters with vulnerable communities, to help bring marginalised voices into decision-making fora. Conversely, we believe the capillarity of our Sisters' presence on the ground can also help to ensure that global policies are implemented locally, fostering transparency and accountability."*

In 2024, UISG will focus on **three major challenges**: mitigating the risk of replicating neo-colonial paradigms in "clean energy" solutions, and promoting transparency in so-called "green" initiatives; limiting the expansion of new mining projects to protect the environment, and reducing the impact of existing extractive industries on the livelihood and health of vulnerable people; promoting just, transparent finance for a regenerative economy, and supporting Catholic communities to engage with faith-based investing.

"To address the root causes of this epoch-defining crisis, we must encourage our leaders to seek radical solutions to radical challenges. At UISG, we are committed to walking side-by-side with communities on the global margins, journeying together towards a safe, just and peaceful future for all people and for our sacred planet," concludes Sister Maamalifar.