



In a first, Oceania Catholic groups unite to advocate at UN Ocean Conference

Following Pope Francis' lead, groups seek to amplify voices of the most vulnerable

(Lisbon, June 24, 2022) For the first time, Oceania Catholic groups will attend the United Nations Ocean Conference. The summit is to be held in Lisbon, Portugal, from June 27 to July 1. It is the second UN Ocean Conference, after the first was held in 2017 in New York.

Catholic leaders from Oceania, including Indigenous Peoples, Cardinals, Jesuits, and Laudato Si' Movement members, will seek to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable and advocate for God's creation from the perspective of their Catholic faith, guided by Pope Francis' Laudato Si'. The conference will focus on advancing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal 14, "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development."

Archbishop Peter Chong of the Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji, and President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO), one of the delegates, said:

"Caring for the environment and addressing climate change must go together. We cannot simply advocate against the climate crisis while continuing to damage our common home. Our Holy Father urges political and business leaders to stop thinking of short-term gains and work for the common good. In addition, Catholic Social Teaching instructs that human beings and the care for God's creation must be at the center of economic development. We will lift up that prophetic advocacy throughout the UN Ocean Conference."

Island states in the Pacific are increasingly bearing the brunt of the ecological, social, and cultural impacts of the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis. Scientists say that global temperature rise is exacerbating extreme weather events and causing sea levels to rise throughout the region. At the forefront are resilient local and Indigenous communities that are struggling to adapt to the multiple crises.

An in-person and parallel side event will showcase those local voices and highlight the role of faith communities and faith-based organizations in advocating for God's gift of creation.

The event, titled ["Oceania Talanoa: Faith, Indigenous, and Nature's Moana Shaping and Safeguarding Innovations of the Sea,"](#) will take place at 18:30 Lisbon / 13:30 New York on Tuesday, June 28. The event will be broadcast live on the Laudato Si' Movement [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) channels.



A cohort of Catholic partners will host the event, and the following UN Ocean Conference delegates are scheduled to participate:

- **Cardinal John Ribat**, Chairman of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania and Member of Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development
- **Theresa Ardler**, Research Indigenous Liaison Officer at Australian Catholic University, Director and Owner of Gweagal Cultural Connections
- **Archbishop Peter Chong**, Archdiocese of Suva, Fiji and current President of the Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania
- **Amy Woolam Echeverria**, International Director of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation for Columban Missionaries and Co-coordinator of the Ecology Taskforce of the Vatican Covid 19 Commission
- **Pelenatita Kara**, Program Manager with the Civil Society Forum of Tonga
- **Malialosa Tapueluelu**, Program Officer of Caritas Tonga
- **Fr. Pedro Walpole**, SJ, Global Coordinator for Ecojesuit, Research Director for the Environmental Science for Social Change, and Network Coordinator for the River Above Asia Oceania Ecclesial Network.
- **Dr. Robyn Reynolds**, OLSH, Senior Lecturer at Yarra Theological Union
- **Tevita Naikasowalu**, Coordinator for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation for the Columban Mission Society in Fiji
- **Musamba Mubanga**, Senior Advocacy Officer at Caritas Internationalis*
- **Fr. Prem Xalxo**, SJ, Faculty Member at Pontifical Gregorian University*

*participating as a delegate at the UN Ocean Conference but not speaking at the parallel event

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About Laudato Si' Movement

Laudato Si' Movement serves the Catholic family around the world to turn Pope Francis' encyclical letter Laudato Si' into action for climate and ecological justice. Laudato Si' Movement's efforts to build a grassroots movement draw on the combined gifts of nearly 800 member organizations and thousands of local volunteers who help bring the Laudato Si' message to life.