

Commonwealth COP29 Pavilion Side Event – Interfaith dialogue to foster collective climate action

Date: 20 November 2024 | Time: 10:00- 11:30

Overview

The Commonwealth is home to 2.5 billion people and embraces its diversity of peoples, cultures and religions to promote values of justice, humanity, compassion and understanding. The Commonwealth Secretariat celebrated 2023 and 2024 as Years of Youth in the Commonwealth to advance youth leadership and engagement in sustainable development. Furthermore, the Secretariat joined hands with the Khalili Foundation to launch the Faith in the Commonwealth movement to harness the potential of faith to strengthen inclusive and sustainable peace, human rights, rule of law, good governance, and democracy as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

World leaders, experts, researchers and climate activists are set to reconvene for COP29 to address the escalating impacts of the climate crisis and find solutions to the myriad challenges, it is important to harness the potential of faith and leverage on faith communities to tackle climate change. Faith communities often hold deep connections to the environment and share values of stewardship, compassion, and justice, which can inspire collective responsibility and sustainable practices. According to UNEP, faith communities are leading by example-communicating the science of climate change through sermons, transitioning houses of worship to renewable infrastructure, divesting from fossil fuels, advocating for climate justice, deploying faith-owned infrastructure and nature-based solutions in disaster recovery, and much more (2024).

Given the escalating climate crisis and social polarization, this session seeks to mobilize faith communities to take collective action towards achieving net-zero and amplifying a moral and ethical call for climate action, moving beyond political and economic motivations. By empowering faith communities, promoting interfaith collaboration, leveraging religious traditions, supporting innovative climate solutions, and fostering partnerships, we can create a future where people and the planet thrive in peace.

Event Structure:

The session will open with a brief welcome and an introduction to the objectives followed by a short panel discussion, featuring insights from the experts, and a representative of the Climate Interfaith Youth Network who will explore how interfaith principles are being applied to climate action. This will lead into a breakout group discussion, where attendees will focus on key

themes: lessons in sustainability from faith, sharing faith-based traditions that are environmentally-friendly, the power of sermons to drive climate action, and how government stakeholders and development actors should harness the potential of interfaith teachings and traditions to drive climate resilience.

Youth leaders will be present to facilitate meaningful dialogue with guiding questions and towards the end of the group exercises, groups will share their discussions and consolidate a call to action for interfaith action for climate resilience.

Expected outcomes:

Promote interfaith collaboration on climate issues

Leverage rich traditions and leadership of faith communities to inspire climate action

Recognise faith communities as key stakeholders for climate action and adaptation

Agenda

Time	Duration	Item	Person
10:00-10:05	5 min	Welcome	Ashraf
10:05-10:10	5 min	Keynote	Commonwealth Speaker
10:10-10:15	5 min	Keynote	Iyad Abumoghli
10:15-10:20	5 min	Keynote	Ismail Weiliang
10:20-11:05	45 min	Breakout discussion	Group 1: Tiffany, Birajith, Rui Yang Group 2: Ramzan, Renato, Genesis Group 3: Carine, Liana, Benjamin
11:05-11:20	15 min	Sharing of insights	Group facilitators
11:20-11:25	5 min	Concluding remarks	Commonwealth
11:25-11:30	5 min	Group photo	Samantha team

Guiding Questions: Empowering Faith Communities for Collective Climate Action

1. How can the teachings of various faith traditions inform and strengthen youth leadership in environmental sustainability?
2. What role do faith-based youth networks play in promoting sustainable and peaceful practices within their communities?
3. How can young faith leaders inspire their peers and community members to engage in climate action rooted in shared values of stewardship and compassion?
4. How can development actors and policymakers include faith leaders and faith communities to leverage on faith-based teachings and traditions to drive climate resilience?