



UNITED FOR OUR COMMON HOME:

FRANCISCANS

AT COP30

Franciscans International

A voice at the United Nations

FRANCISCANS AT COP30

COP30 BLUE ZONE

Franciscan delegates monitored the negotiation, met with diplomats and other stakeholders, took part in official side events and press conferences, and presented a research paper on Just Transition.



TALANOA INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Franciscans International co-organized this annual dialogue in which a diverse group of faith communities gather experiences and ideas guided by three simple questions: where are we now, where do we want to go, and how do we get there? The outcomes were officially presented to the COP30 presidency.



BELÉM

BARQUEATA DA DOME

Franciscans joined over 5.000 activists on a flotilla to mark the start of the Peoples' Summit. Some of the 200 boats had departed from municipalities across Brazil, tracing the 'soy corridor' to raise awareness of the impact of agribusinesses on Indigenous lands.



CANTICLE CELEBRATIONS

Several gatherings were organized to celebrate the 800th anniversary Canticle of Creatures and reflect on the strong echoes between our times and that of Francis of Assisi – the drawing up of walls, the rising inequality, and an environment harmed by human hands.



CLIMATE MARCH

Halfway through COP30, thousands took to the street to demand meaningful climate action. It was the first major protest outside a UN Climate Conference in four years, as the last three gatherings were held in countries with little tolerance for demonstrations.



TAPIRI INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In the Amazon, a Tapiri is a sacred shelter built from the forest where people come to listen, reflect, and act. In Belém, this spirit was captured in a dialogue between Indigenous, grassroots, and faith-based representatives as they explored integral ecology from the perspective of youth, women, and LGBTQ+ communities.



PEOPLES' SUMMIT

Over 60.000 representatives of Indigenous, social, and environmental movements met in a popular space at the University of Pará to explore alternatives strategies to protect our planet. On the 5th and final day of the Summit, its political manifesto was presented to COP30 President André Corrêa do Lago.





The journey to COP30 began long before I set foot in Belém. It began in the Solomon Islands, with a departure that carried both hope and exhaustion. From there, I travelled through Australia, onward to Qatar, then to São Paulo, and finally to Belém – nearly three days of continuous movement across oceans and continents. The distance itself was a reminder of the imbalance at the heart of the climate crisis: those who have contributed least to global emissions must travel the furthest to defend their right to exist.

By the time I arrived in the Amazonian city of Belém, the air was heavy—not only with the humidity of the basin, but with the unmistakable weight of a world standing at a crossroads. During the opening days of the COP30, it became clear to me that these gatherings are no longer merely diplomatic exercises. They have become meetings of the soul – spaces where lived reality confronts political delay and moral hesitation.

The Paradox of Progress

From the outset, COP30 revealed a stark and troubling contradiction. On one side stood the advocates of “extraction as usual”: programs wrapped in the language of green transition, designed to assess

sustainability while quietly creating new pathways for continued exploitation of the Earth. The rhetoric promised progress, but the logic remained unchanged.

On the other side stood the voices of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), including my own home, the Solomon Islands. For us, every climate summit is an alarm bell. We do not attend these meetings to evaluate our survival – we attend because survival itself is at stake. The 1.5°C limit is not a negotiating position; it is the boundary between continuity and disappearance. As our leaders stated clearly during the opening sessions: “We cannot adapt with debt.”

A Voice for the Silenced

Throughout the conference, one question continued to echo: What about the marginalized? What about those whose lands are taken, whose waters are polluted, whose voices are excluded in the name of economic growth?

That question found its clearest answer at the Peoples’ Summit. Joining tens of thousands from across the globe – Indigenous Peoples, frontline communities, youth, and faith leaders – I felt the streets of Belém come alive

beneath our feet. The chants, prayers, and drums converged into one prophetic declaration: “Creation cries. Justice is now.”

This was not a slogan crafted for banners. It was a moral demand. We were asserting inherent rights – not rights conditional on profit, policy frameworks, or market logic, but rights that belong to us by birth. The right to a stable climate. The right to clean water. The right to a homeland that does not vanish beneath rising seas. Our rights are not for sale.

The Franciscan Witness

I attended COP30 as part of Franciscans International’s delegation and as a professed Brother of the Anglican Third Order of the Franciscan Life. This was not simply advocacy work – it was vocation. The long journey from the Pacific to the Amazon was itself an act of witness, rooted in the Franciscan commitment to stand with the poor and with creation.

Together with Indigenous leaders, riverine communities, and young climate advocates, we worked to ensure that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor were heard as one. We called for a truly Just Transition – one that does not merely replace fossil fuels with new forms of

extraction but transforms the economic system so that it honors the dignity, limits, and sanctity of all life.

Not a Candle in the Window

I am deeply grateful to Franciscans International for the opportunity to represent both the Solomon Islands and the wider Franciscan family at COP30. Yet I carry a persistent concern: that our presence may be reduced to a “candle in the window” – a hopeful symbol that flickers briefly before being extinguished by political indifference once delegates return home.

We cannot allow that to happen. What was ignited in Belém in November 2025 must not fade. It must become a bonfire – guiding national policy, strengthening international accountability, and safeguarding the rights of our people. Justice is not a future aspiration to be postponed to another summit. It is an urgent requirement – here and now. And it is our vocation to insist upon it.



Robson Hevalao
Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis

FRANCISCAN ADVOCACY

Franciscans International's engagement at COP30 was deeply rooted in the Franciscan charism, drawing inspiration from the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of Creatures, the 10-year anniversaries of Laudato Si' and the Paris Agreement. Based on Franciscan values that emphasize care for creation, solidarity with the marginalized, and the centrality of peace and justice, the key message carried to COP30 was the moral and ecological urgency of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – that engulfs us. The presence of a large Franciscan delegation served both as a celebration of our ecological commitment and as a call to confront the profound threats facing vulnerable communities and our common home.

Inside COP30, FI focused its advocacy on strengthening Franciscan networks, amplifying grassroots voices, and advancing key policy priorities such as Non-Economic Loss and Damage (NELD) and a Just Transition. Through participation in official negotiations, civil society coalitions, and interfaith initiatives, Franciscans International created spaces for dialogue that centered human rights, equity, and meaningful participation. Our engagement in the COP30 activities, both inside and outside the main venue, enabled Franciscans to share our environmental work with delegates from around the world. Side-events and press briefings allowed us to elevate grassroots voices – particularly those of Indigenous Peoples, youth, and communities living on the frontlines of a changing climate.

One of the key highlights of our advocacy was the launch of a new study offering faith-based perspectives on Just Transition. Building on earlier joint research on NELD, the publication puts forward the views of affected communities that necessary shift to a low carbon future must go beyond mere technical and economic measures. Instead, a truly Just Transition should embrace a systemic societal transformation grounded in justice, compassion, and shared responsibilities.

Throughout COP30, Franciscans International emphasized that, while global ambitions need to be raised, climate policies must not leave vulnerable communities behind. The loss and damage caused by climate change – especially its non-economic dimensions such as cultural heritage and traditional knowledge – must be addressed with urgency. By combining moral conviction, grassroots insights, and policy engagement, our advocacy at COP30 aimed to influence negotiators toward climate solutions that protect our common home while upholding human dignity.



Just transition and
Human Rights:
View of faith-based
communities





The COP30 was not limited to what took place in the official negotiations pavilion. The richness of the meeting was especially evident in some parallel activities: mobilizing civil society, listening to the demands of indigenous peoples, hearing the voice of the younger generations, and looking at the growing role of the Churches in the face of the climate emergency. Music and culture opened paths of dialogue, encouraged hope, and reminded us that there were many other forms of communication that can express what words and official documents cannot.

In the light of faith, and through our charismatic values, we Franciscans recognize we have a role to play. We are united by our Gospel responsibility to protect life, human dignity, and the balance of ecosystems.

We know that the ecological crisis has systemic roots and that we are called to raise awareness about it in order to bring about profound change. We share the struggles and hopes of many communities around the world, where we recognize the seeds of the Kingdom being planted, and hear the constant invitation to rebuild the Church, relationships, and the common home we share.



Adapted from a reflection by
Friar Erick Marín Carballo
Order of Friar Minors Conventual

Cardinal Ambongo attended the UN Climate Conference as one of the signatories of a Call to Action that was issued by the Episcopal Conferences of the Global South ahead of COP30. Starting with a plea to fulfil the Paris Agreement and address the “ecological debt” owned by wealthy nations, the sets out an ambitious agenda to fight climate change.

“I came here with this passion for the protection of our continent and the earth. Because if we don’t take great responsibility, we will leave the generation that comes after us with a planet that will no longer be habitable [...]”

I am surprised that some people – even some of the world’s top officials – really have a complete rejection of this reality. This is a big mistake. As part of the global Franciscan Family, we must be on the front line in relation to this question. It is an obvious fact that we see all over the world.”

Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo
Order of Friar Minors Capuchin



The History of Global
Climate Efforts:
From Stockholm to COP30



Our Prophetic Mission:
Franciscan Voices at the
United Nations



The Episcopal Conferences
of the Global South:
A Franciscan Perspective



Franciscan
Climate Talks:
Live from the blue zone



A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

The Franciscan presence at COP30 was not only an opportunity to carry a message of care for creation and for the marginalized to the world – it was also a moment for introspection. As a community dedicated to environmental justice, how do we compel others to join this ministry, including those already part of the Franciscan Family?

In Belém, the Franciscan delegation spent three evenings in a Talanoa dialogue – a Pacific tradition to engage in an inclusive, participatory, and transparent conversation – to examine this challenge.

Together, we took a critical look at our own work and asked ourselves three questions.

Where are we now?

- Franciscans are global and local – present at both the international level and the grassroots – unified by a common purpose.
- People are open to engage and listen to Franciscans, yet we have become comfortable with the status quo: we are morally obligated to engage with the marginalized and share our lives with them.
- Our charism gives us a mandate – and a need – to act. However, there is a lack of support and coordination of issues related to justice, peace and integrity of creation – even within the Franciscan Family.

Where do we want to go?

- As Franciscans the requisite is to return to the foundations of our charism. By embracing an ecological conversion, we can become living examples and a source of inspiration in the world.
- Care for creation needs to be an “experience” of lifelong formation, both inside the Franciscan family and when we minister to others.
- The world needs to witness a prophetic Franciscan vision that fosters relationships and connections, shaping better understanding of our place in the world.

How do we get there?

- Encourage brothers and sisters in positions of leadership to embrace the movement to protect and preserve our common home. Engage people in our communities to collaborate on these issues.
- Create new resources, including to strengthen and expand the work of the Commissions for Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation.
- Offer new and positive narratives on our duty to care for creation and carry these to the Franciscan family and the wider world, particularly in academic and educational spaces.

Leaving Belém, one thing was clear: COP30 was never the end of the road. In their own communities, Franciscan brothers and sisters will continue their struggle to protect and preserve the planet we all share. The questions and issues raised during these discussions will become part of the building blocks we need to carry forward this ministry and mobilize the larger Franciscan family and those beyond.

We hope you will join us on this journey.



2025 was a year where the realities of climate change and our continued dependence on fossil fuels came home to haunt us all.

COP30 – the 2025 UN Climate Conference in Belém, Brazil – has challenged Franciscans to embrace ecological conversion as we commit ourselves to human dignity, peacebuilding, and care for creation.

The conference was large, in terms of numbers of people and the scope of discussions. Hosted in the Amazon, the presence of Indigenous Peoples, who often exemplified the human cost and lack of economic advantage for marginalized peoples, contrasted to a surreal blend of corporatization, greed, and corruption.

In the year that we celebrated the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of Creatures, a delegation of more than twenty Franciscan sisters and brothers also took part in this climate conference. In this booklet, we share some of their experiences, takeaways, and reflections.

Ecological conversion for Franciscans is rooted in the Canticle: as we observe and relate to creation from a partnership/belonging perspective, we allow ourselves to be transformed in spirit and practice.

With these transformed “eyes and hearts,” we can be the leaders the world needs. As examples – becoming those who sacrifice consumerism and work towards strengthening communities – we also become part of the transformative process that will save creation and humanity from extinction.

This is the Franciscan challenge of the 2020s.

Blair Matheson TSSF
Executive Director
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www.franciscansinternational.org

