



FABC FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

Asian Statement in Support of Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano's "We Raise Our Voice for the Amazon"

By its sheer vastness and magnitude, the world perhaps for the first time, saw that the forest loss in the Amazon is far more than a regional concern but a global crisis. The burning of our forests most disturbingly in Latin America, giving focus to Russia, Alaska, Greenland, Africa and Indonesia, is changing the face of our collective future. We express our support for our brothers and sisters in Latin America and other part of the world who are at the frontlines of this devastation.

Forest burning is an issue close to home. Throughout Asia, most notably in Sumatra at present, but in every country forest fire has caused immeasurable damage to peoples and ecosystems. While many lessons are learned, deliberate systems change in agriculture, mining and transportation is yet to prevent persistent forest loss that is done in the name of economic development and building a consumerist society. The forests of Asia are already greatly fragmented but critical in terms of world biodiversity, culture and climate. Indigenous forest cover is being lost in every Asian country and the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples is increased while their contribution to society is undermined.

We reecho the emphasis of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (CELAM) that the vast fires raging in the Amazon are of "planetary proportions". We reflect on and seek new and universal solidarity that the world needs. We call on all people to "cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents." (LS 14)

The forthcoming Synod for the Amazon recognizes the vital importance of listening to the voices of the Indigenous Peoples and other communities living in the Amazon in defining new paths for the universal Church (Preparatory Document for the Synod). We thank the Holy Father for asking for "the commitment of all" to act in putting out the fires.

For generations, rainforests across the tropics have allowed for a diversity of life to flourish. However, industrial agriculture and extractive industries have entered these areas causing multiple threats to the biodiversity of the land and waters and to the way of life of the Indigenous Peoples who are the traditional custodians of this mega-diversity. It is the Indigenous Peoples who are deeply connected to the forests and rivers throughout the world who live this sacred relation. Even before any forces were deployed, the Indigenous Peoples were the first to protect their ancestral lands by doing what they can to contain the fire.

We urge the governments of Brazil and Bolivia and other leaders in countries within the Amazon region to listen to the 'cry of the earth and the cry of the poor'. We call on the international community to take part in protecting the rights and dignity of all Indigenous Peoples and other communities in every country by taking immediate and serious actions in resolving the current forest fire crisis and loss of Indigenous Peoples' lands. We ask all people of goodwill to find ways and support the care of creation and people on the land, so that we can all benefit from this beautiful life-giving planet.

Fraternally yours in Christ,



+ *Charles*

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