The Dominican Family participated actively at the COP25 in Madrid

"The world is looking at us and expects greater concrete solutions from us. That is why we are not satisfied. The new generations expect more from us. We have an obligation to live up to the circumstances." – Carolina Schmidt, Chilean Environment Minister and Conference President, in her closing speech at the COP25

17th of December, 2019

The International Conference on Climate Change (COP25) in Madrid came to an end on the 15th of December. Despite some progress, this important event ended with a general feeling of unfinished business and disappointment. Throughout the 2 weeks, the Dominicans were present in the various parallel events, negotiations and interfaith meetings in order to inform at best the Dominican Family of the decisions taken at the highest levels.

The Dominican delegation

The last-minute change of venue – from Santiago de Chile to Madrid – impacted greatly the ability of civil society and indigenous organizations from Latin America to have a voice at the COP. Despite this unfortunate change, the Dominicans managed to have a delegation of 8 people at the COP in Madrid, composed of Ms. Laurence Blattmer, Fr. Xabier Gómez OP, Sr. Cecilia Espenilla, Sr. Marcela Zambrano, Ms. Mar Díaz, Ms. Alexia Gordillo Manzano, Ms. María Jesús Fernández Llamera and Mr. Jose Carlos Alcazar Gonzalez.
Coming from various Dominican organizations, namely Dominicans for Justice and Peace, DSI Dominican Sisters international, Acción Verapaz, Samba Martine-Observatorio de Derechos Humanos and Selvas Amazonicas, the delegation brought rich and diverse experiences and perspectives in the discussions on climate change.

Members of the delegation of the Dominican Family

Objectives of the Dominican’s participation

The Dominicans are directly related to vulnerable populations around the world. They are more aware than ever of the immense threat climate change is imposing on people's lives and on the effective enjoyment of their rights, especially on groups in situation of vulnerability. Climate change already endangers millions of people and their livelihoods and hinders the realization of their rights to life, health, food, water, culture, housing, adequate life, a healthy environment and others.

- Jointly with several faith-based organizations, the Dominican Family contributed through advocacy, mobilization and capacity building to address the enormous challenges posed by climate change.
- They seized this moment to send a clear signal to governments to increase their ambition when updating or designing their climate policies, including the highest consideration of human rights at all levels.

Main objective of the States at COP25

One of the main objectives of this COP was to finalize the adoption of guidelines for the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement, which is taking over from the Kyoto Protocol in governing emissions from member countries from 2020 onwards.
Important agenda items of this COP

Some of the key agenda items of this COP were:

- The adoption of rules developing Article 6 on mechanisms of cooperation (including carbon market mechanisms)
- The revision of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, a 2013 International Framework, which was designed for developed countries to provide funding, technology and capacity-building to developing countries in order to help victims of climate change to recover from extreme weather events or climate disasters. The main issue at stake was how this mechanism should be governed and financed.
- The raising of States' ambitions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The establishment of a clear direction to boost these ambitions, closing the gap between current promises and what science requires, was one of the main objectives of this COP.
- The adoption of an updated Gender Action Plan and Program of Action.

Key events with co-organization or involvement of Dominicans

- **Interfaith Dialogue** - Together with 9 other faith-based organizations, Dominicans for Justice and Peace organized on Sunday, 1st of December, an Interfaith Dialogue on Hope and Action to exchange perspectives, create community and offer a time for prayer and reflection prior to the COP25. Nearly 90 people, including members of the Dominican Family, participated and enriched the exchanges. Recognizing the importance of interconnectedness, community, participation, mobilization and collaboration, the participants called for unity, action and transformation of all sectors from education to the economy.
• **Climate March** - Thousands of people hit the streets of Madrid on the 6th of December to demand from world leaders gathered at the COP25 to take urgent climate actions. No less than a dozen Dominicans came to the March, joining their voices to the thousands of protestors.

![Image](image.jpg)

*Members of the Dominican Family in the Climate March*

• **Training on human rights and climate change** - On the Human Rights Day, Dominicans for Justice and Peace, together with 10 faith-based organizations, organized a training to address human rights and climate change issues. Rising global temperatures threaten the effective enjoyment of a range of human rights. The negative impacts of climate change are disproportionately borne by persons and communities already in disadvantageous situations. States and other duty-bearers (including enterprises) have, not only moral, but also legal responsibilities to take effective actions to prevent and repair the harmful human rights impacts of climate change. The objective of the training was to provide civil society with reflections on this crucial topic, to share good advocacy practices in this field, to provide tools to address this critical issue at different levels and to discuss ways to mobilize faith-based communities. The great participation and the fruitful exchanges throughout the day made this event a great success.
• **Prayer on the care for our common home** - In the evening of the 10th of December, the Dominicans organized a prayer for the care of the common home as well as in solidarity with India, in the context of the Dominican Month for Peace. Around 25 Dominicans gathered and shared this moment of compassion for the people and the Earth.
Results of COP25

Overall, the COP25 has been characterized by slow negotiations and squabbling over technical details. Brazil, Australia, the US, China and other major emitters hold up progress. After two extra days and nights of negotiations, the COP25 ended last Sunday with divisions over key questions, such as the carbon markets of Article 6, which were delayed until the next gathering in 2020. As the current proposals of Article 6 were undermining the States’ commitments to respect human rights, a majority of civil society organizations believes it is finally safer to postpone any decisions on this article.

But most disappointing is that large emitters failed to clarify how they will scale up their ambition to reduce gas emissions and did not recognize the importance of civil society’s participation in the development of climate policies. States also failed to provide a robust global response to loss and damage. On a more positive stance, negotiators have set the path for the promotion of gender equality and the participation of indigenous peoples in the design of climate actions.

We cannot give up

As governments are failing to respond in an adequate manner to the global crisis, people are rising up more and more. COP25 has not delivered adequately, but we will all return stronger in 2020 and put greater pressure on our governments.

“The science is clear, but the science is being ignored. Whatever happens we will never give up. We have only just begun.” – Greta Thunberg in a Tweet, Dec 14, 2019

Laurence Blattmer
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