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Singer, radio and television presenter
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Catholic universe

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The people's voice demands action over climate change

World-renown naturalist Sir David Attenborough demands immediate response from governments as UN chief admits 'world is in deep trouble'

Nick Benson

Catholics from across the world have urged all governments to take action to ensure that global warming does not exceed 1.5°C.

Their calls come as Sir David Attenborough issued a stark warning that the collapse of civilisations and extinction of much of the natural world is "on the horizon" without action to tackle climate change.

The naturalist and TV presenter delivered a message from people around the world to United Nations climate talks in Katowice, Poland, calling for leaders and decision-makers to take charge on driving down greenhouse gas emissions.

Sir David was speaking on behalf



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres: 'Climate change is running faster than we are'

of the UN's 'People's Seat' initiative to give ordinary people a voice at the international talks by gathering their thoughts, ideas and concerns through social media and polling in the past two weeks.

He said the world is facing its "greatest threat in thousands of years: climate change".

"If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon."

And he said: "The world's people have spoken, their message is clear, time is running out, they want you, the decision-makers, to act now."

"They're supporting you in making tough decisions but they're also willing to make sacrifices in their daily lives."

The UN has launched an

'ActNow.bot' which helps people discover simple everyday actions they can take to tackle climate change.

Sir David said: "The people have spoken: leaders of the world, you must lead, the continuation of our civilisations and the natural world upon which we depend are in your hands."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned negotiators at the meeting that the world was "in deep trouble" with climate change.

"Climate change is running faster than we are and we must catch up sooner rather than later, before it's too late," he said. "For many people, regions and even countries, this is already a matter of life and death."

It was a sentiment echoed by the Columban General Council, which also urged governments to take meaningful action to combat global warming.

The Columbans – for a long time at the vanguard of Catholic concern over the environment – said in a statement delivered by Fr Timothy Mulroy, superior general: "Columbans worldwide see intimately the devastating impacts of climate change on people and Earth and commit to the protection of biodiversity as integral to our missionary vocation of caring for all of God's creation."

"We celebrate the courageous Climate Pilgrims who have walked 1,500 kilometers from the Vatican to Katowice in their witness to the need for an urgent transition to a just climate economy, an increase in climate finance and a global rulebook that holds countries accountable for their climate commitments."

"We pray that COP24 will result in meaningful policy and action that brings the urgent change needed to set the world on a path to climate healing and justice for all."

More on Katowice: See page 2

'If we don't take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon'

Sir David Attenborough



Bishops call for greater ambition on warming

The Catholic bishops' of England and Wales have urged politicians to work towards an 'ambitious implementation of the Paris Agreement'.

In a joint statement with the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of the EU they encouraged participants of Katowice's 24th Conference of the Parties – known as COP24 – to ensure that the conference proves a milestone in the path set out in Paris in 2015 and hears both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.

"COP 24 begins in the context of an UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlighting the urgent need to work towards limiting global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, a major WWF report showing that we have witnessed an overall decline of 60 per cent in species population sizes between 1970 and 2014 and projections from the MET Office which show increasing summer temperatures, more extreme weather and rising sea levels in the UK over the next century," said the Catholic bishops.

But the bishops said they were convinced that concerted action could have a positive impact. 'We have seen how the Earth's protective ozone layer is continuing to recover, showing how, when the international community takes serious collaborative action, we are capable of healing our wounded planet, giving us reason to be optimistic that we can do what is necessary to limit global warming to 1.5°C.'

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