



## **Ecojesuit Meeting 2023: Commitment, Collaboration, Communication** 8-10 August 2023, Bendum, Philippines

### **Meeting Takeaways: Seeking to give life to a world that cares for the Common Home**

The world continues to face ever growing difficulties. Climate change, food and water insecurity, and biodiversity loss collectively impact, intensifying the uncertainties and fiercely compounding widespread vulnerability that exacerbate the conditions in the margins. With poor political action for the Common Home, the challenges are mounting as economic development continues to overshadow integral human development, ecological justice for the most vulnerable, and intergenerational solidarity.

These are the tensions we hold as we speak of a shared mission, and as we seek to understand the collective dialogue needed to make the changes in global society. In *De Statu Societatis 2023: Sent to collaborate in the reconciliation of all things in Christ*, Father Arturo Sosa SJ reminds us that we have not found the way forward to effectively collaborate in the Care for the Common Home. “There is a growing desire to do something, but we need to move beyond good intentions. Often, our actions are more cosmetic than genuine ecological conversion that requires profound changes in our lifestyle and work, which we consciously and unconsciously resist. Deepening our intellectual contribution in this field must be accompanied by the promotion of public policies that ensure the fulfillment of the commitments to measures agreed upon to reverse the deterioration of the environment worldwide.” (DSS, pp. 93-94)

This posits a genuine challenge for Ecojesuit to expand its networking for social commitment at the local, regional, and global levels. This gathering is an effort to strengthen our commitment to act, renew a more focused collaboration and communication given the new core members, and find a more comprehensive communication.

We began with reflecting on our eco-spirituality through engaging with the Pulangiyēn - particularly the *datu*, the cultural and spiritual leader - to receive the welcome and blessing of the indigenous community and share in the bounty of the land. We listened to the youth as we walked across the land and saw the deeper aspirations reflected in their work. In this process, we listened to each other as we collectively discerned the broader partnerships needed through our commitment, collaboration, and communication.

#### **Commitment**

We draw strength from the broader awareness and importance given by an increasing number of provinces and conferences to care for our Common Home.

Solidarity is important in growing our relationships as an advocacy network, recognizing that there are many individuals and organizations connecting with people and planet. We are aware that the mission goes beyond us and our ministries. In this shared mission, we seek conversion of our own hearts that strengthens our will and motivation to work together for our Common Home. This deepens our commitment as we give witness to the human suffering in the most recent tragedies. We seek to understand how to make justice available for all, both in immediate cases and in the increasing intergenerational wrongs.

## Collaboration

We are grateful that all six conferences are represented in the meeting (five in-person and one online) and that there are supportive partners from the Christian Life Community, Centre Arrupe Madagascar, Jesuit Refugee Service-Asia Pacific, and the Environmental and Economic Justice Task Force of the International Association of Jesuit Universities. We remain strong and committed even if our group is small, but can become bigger and stronger through Province commitment in some Conferences.

We deepened our relationship and collaboration through exploring local to global approaches, such as meeting the margins and learning more about community-based participatory action research, story-based advocacy strategies, policy advocacy, and cross-apostolate dialogues. These are initiatives that can be sustained in each Conference and broadly communicated.

## Communication

Beyond the Ecojesuit website and social media, there are other ecological engagements that are communicated and where the message of Ecojesuit gets out. These include the involvement in the Laudato Si' Action Platform and in other supported initiatives from various Conferences like the Ignatian Carbon Challenge, among others. There is also the continued monitoring of the COP processes, and the recent Magis gathering in Portugal.

## Moving forward

We value these key takeaways that we bring back to our Conference Presidents and Conference Social Secretaries, Provinces, and Institutions in moving forward:

1. In building a framework for collaboration, agroecology (food and water justice) emerged as a common concern that can draw together our actions and collaborations with youth, ecclesial networks, civil society groups, and policy advocates for just energy transition and overall climate justice.
2. Sharing and practicing the methods and using the tools for collaborating on research, communications, and advocacy deepen our accompaniment of vulnerable communities.
3. Nurturing collaboration between social and educational apostolates, committees, task forces, and events provides a greater contribution that allow for better connection with, and service of, local communities and Creation.
4. Sharing in the call for greater collaboration in engaging with the process of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the UN Framework Conference on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the local, national, and global levels strengthens and builds hope for a faith-based global advocacy on ecological justice. A statement supporting the intergenerational action for climate responsibility in Germany emerged in the process.
5. Putting more focus in the Ecojesuit online communication platforms on agroecology stories and practices from local experiences, especially indigenous, enriches the advocacy to promote agroecology and helps the Ecojesuit network connect more with others at the local, Conference, and global levels.
6. The strengthening of the Ecojesuit team in each of our Conferences involves all Provinces and the sharing of initiatives to be done in their own communities while engaging others in key ecological and social points of action.
7. Compiling an issue of Promotio Iustitiae in 2024 is a committed task of Ecojesuit partners and collaborators that can help communicate the work and get more involvement from others.
8. Exploring options for the Ecojesuit meeting in the first two weeks of July 2024 was initially discussed with Africa as a possible venue.

Our time together in the *gaup* (ancestral domain) of the Pulangiyēn deepened our sense of eco-spirituality as we witnessed how faith is lived out in the margins. We gained a deeper understanding of the culture in nurturing relationships with land, water, forest, biodiversity, and people. This is living Laudato Si' as we reflect and learn from the gratitude and hope shown by the youth amid growing difficulties while cultivating a spirit of generosity and care for others.

The Ecojesuit statement supporting the peaceful climate protests in Germany that Father Jörg Alt SJ accompanies is a meaningful example of a local to global advocacy. Previous Ecojesuit statements focused on the concerns for an effective COP27 meeting that sought more consciousness of the failing global commitments, and to engage locally in more sustained efforts for change.

As the Global Ignatian Advocacy Network on Ecology, we are called to reflect on the broader, critical question that Father Sosa raises: "How far is it possible to identify with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for justice, which inevitably involves political structures?" (DSS, p.77)

While we recognize that ecological concern is now beyond awareness, the challenge is moving beyond goodwill and towards concerted action. We acknowledge that our connectedness as an advocacy network is also our connectedness with people, vulnerable communities, and Creation. By being together, there is a deeper sense of shared responsibility as we also found consolation in our shared efforts. By being together, we are strengthened by each other's commitment in working towards an integral ecological way of living while being with the most vulnerable.

*Xavier Jeyaraj SJ, Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat, General Curia of the Society of Jesus*

*Peter Walpole SJ, Ecojesuit Global Coordinator*

*Ngonidzashe Edward SJ, Eco-delegate, Jesuit Conference of Africa and Madagascar*

*Christopher Kellerman SJ, Eco-delegate, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States*

*Dennis Gabriel Lamug-Nañawa SJ, Eco-delegate, Jesuit Conference of Asia-Pacific*

*Filipe Martins SJ, Eco-delegate Jesuit Conference of European Provincials*

*Silvio Marques Sousa Santos SJ, Eco-delegate, Conference of Jesuit Provincials in Latin America and the Caribbean*

*John Kennedy Savarimuthu SJ, Eco-delegate, Jesuit Conference of South Asia*

*Maria Isabelle "Beng" Climaco, Network Partner, Christian Life Community-Philippines*

*Louie Bacomo, Network Partner, Jesuit Refugee Service Asia-Pacific*

*Efa Ravelonantoandro, Network Partner, Centre Arrupe Madagascar*

*Ecojesuit Secretariat: Maricel de Jesus, Danielle de Jesus, Criselle Mejillano, Sylvia Mielat, and Rowena Soriaga of Environmental Science for Social Change, Sue Martin of the Jesuit Conference of Asia-Pacific, with support from Liza San Mateo, Jason Menaling and the FFLM team, and Joey Murillo of the Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center.*