

FCBCO Summary – 12 April 201

– James van Schie

The Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania ('FCBCO') is now underway with 80+ bishops from across Oceania along with expert guests. The focus of today's meetings was the effects of climate change on nations and their economies.

All gathered were delighted that the key note address was delivered by the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Pietro Parolin. He is "the no. 2" in the worldwide Catholic Church.

His focus, drawing on the writings of Pope Francis (*Laudato Si'*), was to show the connectedness of the entire worldwide human family. His fundamental point was that we all share a common home which we call planet earth. While this may be obvious on one level, if this truth is accepted then there are ethical implications for everyone as to how we use the treasures of the land and sea.

The Cardinal did not shy from identifying the widespread scourges of unsustainable development, exploitative industries, and unjust land usage. He pleaded for a deep-seated conversion of attitudes towards God's gift of creation. In particular, he named politicians and policy makers but also noted that each and everyone of us needs to put into practice responsible and modest living.

Cardinal Parolin implored the audience to do all possible to overturn the globalization of indifference. In today's world, he said, frontiers cannot be places behind which we hide from global responsibility.

A particularly distinguished address was given by Professor Ottmar Edenhoffer. This world renowned scientist gave an incisive and detailed account of the way in which the effects of climate change can be measured. He also analyzed the industries which most contribute to the carbon emissions, especially coal dependent industries.

In his presentation he explored effects of climate change which are less widely recognised. Examples included displacement of entire communities as a result of disruptive weather patterns and droughts and floods. In countries where infrastructure is limited or where there are already tensions between various groupings of people, forced migration can spill over into violent conflict.

Prof Edenhoffer challenged the bishops to work with their people to make reduction of carbon emissions "a political non-negotiable". Through his international work he is aware that many political parties agree that the effects of climate change even in the short to medium term are destructive but the courage to align policy with industrial and consumer change is still grossly lacking. It is up to each individual voter in every nation to demand of their leader's effective action for the good of everyone.

The last speaker of the day was Msgr Primin Spiegel, Managing Director of Misereor in Germany. His input exemplified a collaborative international relationship which brings expertise from Europe to Oceania. Cardinal Ribat, who also addressed the assembly, has been a guest of the Misereor and has brought the voice and perspective of Oceania and the catastrophic impact of climate change into the heart of Europe.

This afternoon, the bishops will celebrate Mass at Caritas Technical School, Boroko.

Background on speakers

- Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of His Holiness The Pope. The Cardinal has been in this role since 2013, and has worked in the diplomatic service of the Holy See for thirty years. The Cardinal will speak on Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'* which underlies the theme of the Assembly.
- Professor Ottmar Edenhofer, one of the world's leading experts on climate change policy and environmental and energy policy, speaking to the Assembly on Catholic Social Teachings.
- Monsignor Primin Spiegel – is the Managing Director and Chairman of the Board of the Misereor and he also addressed the theme of 'taking care of our common home'

Media enquiries.

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