

Tzu Chi Attends the UNFCCC COP 20

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation

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“Because natural disasters are increasing, relief strategies must improve, they must be more efficient and effective, and must be handled together cohesively. Religion and inter-religious societies, among others, have the strength to unite people and societies in a common goal and idea” said Peng.

Lima, Peru, December 3, 2014, the first time that a representative of Tzu Chi has spoken at a press conference held on United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Dr. Chi-Ming Peng, a meteorologist and Tzu Chi volunteer, was invited to speak at the Faith and Science Climate Unity press conference. As a Buddhist follower of Dharma Master Cheng Yen, a climate scientist, and an expert on meteorology, Dr. Peng spoke on the interrelationship of faith, science, and climate change related disasters.

The press conference featured 9 other speakers who were representatives either of faith-based organizations or of scientific institutions and presented at the Faith and Science Declaration on Climate Change to Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC Christina Figueres, to which she graciously accepted, though she was unable to attend the conference in person. The signed document, the Faith and Science Declaration on Climate Change, was initiated by Dr. Stuart Scott of the United Planet Faith and Science Initiative (UPSI) to unite groups from faith and from science to urge for rapid and decisive climate action; moreover, the declaration sought to align participating faith and science leaders and groups with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which succeeds the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and converges with the post 2015 development agenda.

Of the speakers and representatives who signed the declaration, Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, the Chairperson of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and 2007 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, also signed it. Though Dr. Pachauri’s statement was filmed by Tzu Chi’s US 360 team, the footage was unable to be played due technical difficulties faced throughout the conference.

Other key speakers included Martin Kopp of the Lutheran World Foundation delegation, who spoke of the #FastfortheClimate campaign, Serafin Kykkotis, the archbishop of Zimbabwe who urged governments to protect their people as if they were their children, and Dr. Saleem Huq of the IPCC who spoke of climate justice and stated that climate change “is a moral issue as the victims of climate change are the poor people in developing nations and poor people of developed nations.”

The signed document and declaration calls for global leaders to take science-based actions to avert the dangers of climate change and recognizes the science and evidence of climate change and that climate change is not only an economic problem, but also “a moral, spiritual, and cultural one.”

Adding to the declaration, Dr. Peng stated that “although charity [as it pertains to relief efforts]

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cannot be provided to all, the burden of suffering can be carried by all. Disaster relief cannot be solved by just monetary means, but more importantly by scientific innovation.”

Just as the declaration gave a call to action, so too did Dr. Peng, stating that alongside scientific innovation, there must be “an international standard for disaster relief implementation, as well as complete and transparent data access to donations and funding for relief efforts.” He further noted that because of the increasing rate and strength of climate change related disasters, government support is not enough; climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts must be a commitment for all, as it is an existential issue that affects all parties, all nations and peoples, and all life on Earth.

“From civil society to the private sector, from community organizations to families and individuals, all parties are stakeholders, all must be more active, involved, and dedicated” said Peng.

As Dr. Peng’s statement ended, he shared the words and wisdom of Master Cheng Yen to the press and attendees of the conference, “In times of great tragedy, a call emerges for great awakening”.

By Hanford Lin