



A Quaker call for climate justice: Britain Yearly Meeting statement ahead of COP26

We are at a point of crisis for humanity and for the living world. Climate breakdown, poverty, oppression, forced migration and violent conflict are deeply connected. They are driven by an economic system based on exploiting people and nature to extract profit for a few.

We must act now to transform our economy and society for a just and peaceful future. We must demand change through political action, and enact change in our communities.

Broken promises

We have heard the UK government claim to be a global leader on climate. But we also see proposals for new coal and oil extraction; irreplaceable ancient woodland felled for new roads; and millions of people struggling to heat their leaky homes while the government cancels insulation grants. Ambitious pledges are hollow when actions undermine them.

The UK's COP Presidency promised 'the most inclusive COP ever'. Delegates and activists whose vaccinations have not been recognised, or who have been prevented from attending by unclear quarantine rules, have seen this promise broken. The presence of Indigenous and global South leaders and activists at COP26 is essential, in order to hear from all voices. With so many people prevented from attending, it is more important than ever to add our voices to their calls for justice.

What justice requires

Rich countries like the UK have done the most to cause the climate crisis, and owe the rest of the world an immense 'climate debt'. For centuries, our wealth and emissions have been enabled by imperial expansion, leaving people in the global South facing the worst impacts of a crisis they have done little to cause. We must rapidly cut our own national emissions to zero, without relying on carbon credits or future negative emissions technologies; and we must provide our fair share of funding for a global just transition beyond fossil fuels. Paying our debts also means finding money for communities already bearing the brunt of climate breakdown, by setting up an international loss and damage fund paid for by polluters.

We will rise to the challenge of the climate crisis only through love and cooperation. Successful international negotiations rest on honesty and integrity. We hold our politicians and negotiators in the Light, to be bolder and braver for the climate, for all our sakes. At COP26, there must be no more loopholes, no more exemptions for aviation or military emissions. We cannot outwit the atmosphere with accounting tricks.

Our Quaker call to action

Working to build a more just and peaceful world is at the heart of what it means to be Quaker. Our faith does not permit us to stand by while the splendour of the world is destroyed for short-term profit. As in the days of early Quakers, we sense this is a time of prophecy and want to uphold the prophets in our midst and in the wider world. We uphold all people taking action for climate justice, whatever their contribution.

We commit to listening to the experiences of dispossessed people around the world, and to putting their rights at the heart of our response. On 31 October, Quaker communities will be gathering for worship, holding in the Light all environmental defenders and communities at the sharp end of the climate crisis. On 6 November, we will join thousands of people on the streets of Glasgow, across Britain, and around the world, in a day of action for climate justice. We call on Friends, and all those who are called to live for truth and justice, to join us.