**Statement to the COP 21 meeting in Paris 2015**

The Executive Committee of the **Federation of Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania** is currently meeting in Noumea, New Caledonia. As representatives of the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Australia, CEPAC (the Pacific Island nations), New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, we come from a multitude of island nation States spread throughout the Pacific.

We are heartened by the growing international concern about Climate Change and Global Warming. Governments and international bodies are taking up the united cry of citizens to implement and monitor outcome focused policies to reduce practices and choices that impact negatively on the environment and thus on our peoples.

Of particular concern to us are rising sea levels, ocean acidification, and unusual rainfall patterns. These are affecting many of our communities in a harmful way. In some cases, entire regions and nations are under threat from the indisputable fact of rising sea levels. Examples from this part of the world include the Carteret Islands, Fead Islands, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, the Mortlock Islands, Nukumanu Islands, the Tokelau Islands, and Tuvalu. Efforts to build seawalls are largely ineffective against the rise of tides and consequently scarce fertile soil and cultivation areas are being destroyed rapidly. While offers of relocation are generous in themselves, uplifting a people from one place and planting them in another is a “solution” that is fraught with difficulty and at times even insensitivity to cultural identity and traditions.

Pope Francis in his recent encyclical ***Laudato Si’*** (on Care for our Common Home) invites – indeed urges – the entire global human family to see our planet and its peoples as our universal *home*. Homes need care and should be safe havens in which the next generation is raised. What is good for individual families – including in a special way economically poor families – is good for the worldwide family and what is good for the wordwide human family should also be good for the world’ s most vulnerable individual families.

The protection of the atmosphere and the oceans are powerful examples of the need for political representatives and leaders of nations to take responsibility for the wellbeing of peoples beyond their own particular shores or borders. This requires courageous, selfless, far-sighted governance shaped by the principles of justice and fairness that reflect and protect the best of the human person.

We commit to encouraging our own people, civic leaders included, to do their part to foster sustainable and equitable developmental and economic policies in our region. And we implore those gathered in Paris to work assiduously to reach binding outcomes that will enhance the care and protection of our planet as the home of the citizens of the world.

Noumea August 2015

Sighted and signed by the following members:

1. ***Archbishop John Ribat MSC :* President of the Federation of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania Executive Committee (FCBCO) and Archbishop of Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; Representative of the Catholic Bishops conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC-PNG/SI).**
2. ***Bishop Robert McGuckin:* Deputy President of FCBCO Executive; Bishop of the Diocese of Toowoomba and Representative of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC).**
3. ***Bishop John Bosco Baremes SM:* Bishop of Port Villa, Vanuatu and the FCBCO Executive representing Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC).**
4. ***Archbishop Michel Calvet SM:* Archbishop of Noumea, New Caledonia and member of the FCBCO Executive representing the Episcopal Conference of the Pacific (CEPAC).**
5. ***Bishop Colin Campbell:* Bishop of Dunedin, New Zealand and member of FCBCO Executive representing New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC).**
6. ***Bishop Charles Drennan:* Bishop of Palmerston North, New Zealand and member of the FCBCO Executive representing New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC).**
7. ***Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv:* Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne and member of FCBCO Executive representing ACBC.**

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