

**Speech by Right Rev Dr Derek Browning  
Scotland's faith communities and the Climate Change Bill, 18 April  
2018**

Minister, Members of the Scottish Parliament,

I welcome this opportunity to join faith leaders to call for Scotland to assert its leading role in responding to climate change. I want to thank the organisers and our colleagues and friends at Christian Aid, SCIAF, Tear Fund and Islamic Relief for their hard work at making this event possible.

Faith leaders around the world are calling for climate justice. We know from Christiana Figueres, UN Secretary to the Paris climate summit, that faith groups played a vital role at the summit in December 2015 in helping governments have the confidence to reach an agreement. This role is not new but it is becoming more important for a number of reasons.

First, churches and other faith groups have a vital role in bringing messages and stories from those most affected by climate change to audiences and political leaders in Scotland and elsewhere.

While it is important to get the facts and figures about tonnes of carbon and percentages and targets right it is the human stories that change hearts and minds and faith groups understand this.

Last November the Church of Scotland helped bring together representatives from churches in the Pacific, from Tuvalu and Fiji to meet the First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, when she visited the UN climate conference in Bonn. Their stories about the catastrophic impact of climate change on Pacific islands, and the stories that partners here today bring from around the world to Scottish audience make clear the message we need to understand here and elsewhere: climate change is changing lives.

We are proud that the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government have shown leadership in promoting climate action in the past and now have the opportunity to assert once again that Scotland has a leading role to play. Last year in our response to the Scottish governments proposals for the climate change bill we said:

*Scotland has made impressive progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions since the 2009 Act. Targets that were previously thought to*

*be unattainable, such as meeting an interim target of a 43% reduction by 2020 have already been exceeded.*

*A net target of 100% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 ... might appear very difficult to achieve but with rapid decarbonisation of the economy envisaged in the draft Scottish Energy Strategy there is no reason to dismiss it. The Scottish Government could make this commitment and set a global standard for others to follow.*

We recognise that this is a tremendous challenge and here is a second reason why faith groups are important and can play a growing role. Working with Eco-Congregation Scotland we can reach out to over 400 eco-congregations across Scotland to help give them the confidence to make changes in their lives and in their communities to respond to this challenge.

A low carbon economy will not be possible unless people and communities across Scotland know why it is important and believe it is possible. This cannot be achieved by legislators or government alone; it requires hearts and minds to be convinced so that progressive change can be built on and sustained.

And here is the third and possibly most important reason why faith groups are important: because ... we have faith. We share the earth, our common home gifted to us, with seven billion others whose descendants depend on getting our response to climate change right. We have faith that this is possible.

Minister, Members of the Scottish Parliament, we ask you to join us in making this commitment to making Scotland a net zero carbon economy by 2050. Help us deliver a better future for our planet.