

Santa Marta conference on fossil fuel transition

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Dozens of countries will be gathering in Santa Marta, Colombia, April 24–29, for the [First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels](#). Organizers expect that participants – representing nations, local and regional governments, and other sectors of society – will work together to identify ways to lessen dependence on coal, oil and gas.

Catholic bishop conferences in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean [i.e., Abya Yala] hold out great hope for this conference as expressed in their [“Manifesto of the churches of the global south for our common home.”](#) The statement was also affirmed by Church leaders in Europe and Oceania.

Annual international climate negotiations, formerly called the Conference of the Parties (COP), have focused on minimizing the harms of greenhouse gases and a warming planet. But over three decades, participating countries haven’t been able to come to an agreement on how to address, or even name, the cause of the climate crisis: the extraction of fossil fuels.

“As pilgrim Churches in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia, we witness that climate change is not only an environmental crisis, but also a consequence of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and an ‘economy that kills,’ according to the Manifesto authors.

“Therefore, guided by the preferential option for the poor and the care of creation described in the Catholic Social Teaching, we declare our unwavering support for a just transition and strongly call on the governments of the world to adopt a treaty to stop proliferation and abandon fossil fuels as a moral and political imperative,” the Manifesto continues.

Organizers of the Santa Marta conference make clear that the forum isn’t meant to replace formal climate negotiations, nor is it a space for working on a fossil fuel treaty. Instead, it is “intended to support practical action by those already prepared to move forward” and “to generate shared understanding and actionable guidance that can help accelerate a just, orderly and equitable transition away from fossil fuels.”

[Forty-six countries are registered](#) to attend the conference, including major oil-producing nations like Australia, Brazil, Canada and Norway. The U.S. government will not be

represented, but state and local officials are expected to attend along with non-governmental organizations, including our partners at Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.