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# Conference of the Parties (COP) 28 in Pope Francis' Ecological Inclusivity Framework

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## Abstract

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is an essential body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that aims to radically cut emissions, expedite the shift to renewable energy, and, as much as possible, avoid fossil fuels to limit global warming to 1.5 °C and below. The study intends to unravel how international politics posed a major challenge in its history for 28 years. Using Pope Francis' integral ecology framework, the research identifies ways to address this issue that can raise awareness to mitigate the problem of implementing its goals due to such power dynamics. As qualitative research using documentary analysis, this employs a triangulation method that involves primary sources on the proceedings of the conference, writings of Pope Francis on the environment, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda. The scope of the study is within the ambit of how the haggles of international politics, resulting in slowing the realization of COP's goals, have been challenged by Pope Francis' integral ecology paradigm. In COP28, rich nations committed to cooperating and even led the implementation. However, their lifestyle and lack of politics will obstruct and slow down the process. Pope Francis noticed this gap and urged world leaders to go beyond their national interests and work for our common home. Pope Francis advocated for social justice, where the poor are prioritized in the impact of climate change. His words are targeting world leaders to influence their decision-making. If given the chance, his integral ecology framework may serve as a guiding wisdom to put into reality the COP aspirations to save Mother Earth.

**Keywords:** International Politics, Integral Ecology, Climate Change, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Background of Study

Pope Francis released his apostolic exhortation entitled *Laudate Deum* (Praise God) on the feast of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4, 2023, to punctuate his serious agenda about climate change, which he started in *Laudati Si* (Praise Be) on June 18, 2015. He drumbeats his theme of inclusivity that applies to all creatures and their home, the earth, which is challenged by global warming. *Laudate Deum* (Chapter 5) boldly articulated Conference of the Parties (COP) 28 that amidst the failures of previous COPs particularly COP27 in Egypt where it presented bigger promises but weak implementation (Ozdemir, 2024, p. 15), Pope Francis saw COP28 as a spring of hope to lower global temperatures to under 2° C and decrease its status to 1.5° C (LD 48).

The issue about global warming is not just about the temperature, but the concerted effort of the international community to have the political will to decrease and eventually eliminate fossil fuels that have caused so much havoc to the environment. COP aspires to work for zero carbon alternatives that are affordable and viable in most if not all countries in the world (Climate Champions, 2023), and at the same time work with the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) for a collective commitment to lessen the impact of climate change to developing countries (Adaptation Fund COP9 and COP12), help them in the transfer of technology to cope with these challenges through its Green Climate Fund (COP17 and 18), and financially compensate poor nations by its Loss and Damage Mechanisms (COP19).

Conference of the Parties (COP) is the forum of the 197 countries signatories to make decisions connected to global warming. This is an essential body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) since its inception in 1995, held in Berlin, Germany. From then on, it has annual conferences that are part of the UNFCCC to review national inventories offered by Parties (UNFCCC, 2024). The subsequent COP conferences and their themes are:

**Table 1.***COP Conferences and their themes.*

<b>COP Climate Change Conference Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Key Theme</b>
COP2 July 8-19, 1996	Geneva, Switzerland	Caring for People and Planet
COP3 December 1-11, 1997	Kyoto, Japan	Kyoto Protocol was established to create a mandatory standard for greenhouse gas emission reductions. This is solidified by the so-called Kyoto mechanisms that include clean development and emission trading mechanisms
COP4 2 November 2-13, 1998	Buenos Aires	Continuation of the Kyoto Protocols by checking its compliance
COP5 October 25-November 5, 1999	Bonn, Germany	Follow up on Kyoto Protocol's mechanisms and compliance issues, including the evaluation of technical and political components in minimizing the emissions of CO <sub>2</sub>
COP6 November 13-24, 2000	The Hague, Netherlands	Focus on building capacities of poor countries while tackling the specifics of the Kyoto protocols, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), emission target compliance, and the transfer of technology

**Table 1.***Continued.*

<b>COP Climate Change Conference Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Key Theme</b>
COP7 October 29 to November 10, 2001	Marrakech, Morocco	Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as mandated in the Kyoto protocols and the commitment to implement the Bonn Agreements
COP8 October 23 – November 1, 2002	New Delhi, India	The challenge is to minimize the impact of global warming on poor countries and to find ways to transfer technology for sustainability
COP9 December 1–12 2003	Milan, Italy	Adaptation Fund to assist poor nations in resisting the challenges of global warming
COP10 December 6– 17, 2004	Buenos Aires, Argentina	Development of a Plan of Action in Buenos Aires to support developing countries in better adapting to climate change
COP11 November 28 - December 10, 2005	Montreal, Canada	Sustain Kyoto Protocol beyond 2012 and lobby to increase cuts in greenhouse emissions
COP12 November 6– 17, 2006	Nairobi, Kenya	The procedures and modalities for the Adaptation Fund were agreed to support developing nations. However, there was a divide between the scientific imperative on global warming and the political process to address the issues.

**Table 1.***Continued.*

<b>COP Climate Change Conference Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Key Theme</b>
COP13 December 3-14, 2007	Bali, Indonesia	Enhancement of the Kyoto Protocol's implementation beyond 2012 by the formation of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA) as a subsidiary body to conduct negotiations.
COP14 December 1-12, 2008	Poznan, Poland	In principle, it was agreed to finance poor countries to cope with the impact of global warming and incorporate forest protection to combat the challenge of climate change
COP15 December 7-18, 2009	Copenhagen, Denmark	An accord was approved, adding more resources, including US\$30 billion for 2010-2012 for climate financing. Longer-term options for sustainability were mentioned and submitted to the UN Secretary General's High-Level Advisory Group for Global Warming.

**Table 1.***Continued.*

<b>COP Climate Change Conference Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Key Theme</b>
COP16 November 28 – December 10	Cancun, Mexico	IPCC, or the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, represents the UN's body in evaluating the science connected to climate change. All parties should comply with the 2 °C global warming set by the IPCC 4th Assessment Report.
COP17 November 28 - 9 December 9, 2011	Durban, South Africa	Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created to develop a management framework to distribute the US \$100 billion/year to assist poor nations adapt to climate impacts.
COP18 November 26 - December 7, 2012	Doha, Qatar	There was little progress in implementing GCF.
COP19 November 11- 23, 2013	Warsaw, Poland	Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) was established to address the loss and damage related to climate change impacts.
COP20 December 1- 12, 2014	Lima, Peru	The "Lima Call for Climate Action" was adopted to advance the negotiations among nations in cutting CO2 emissions while preparing a way for the Paris Agreement.

**Table 1.***Continued.*

<b>COP Climate Change Conference Date</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Key Theme</b>
COP21 November 30- December 12, 2015	Paris, France	Based on the year's emissions level, countries agreed to cut their emissions.
COP22 November 7- 18, 2016	Marrakech, Morocco	The issue was focused on water and ways to sustain it, and at the same time, a response to poor countries' need to decrease greenhouse emissions and reduce CO2 from energy sources.
COP23 November 6- 17, 2017	Bonn, Germany	Powering Past Coal Alliance (PPCA) was inaugurated with the main function of accelerating the phase-out of coal.
		Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage was established to provide mechanisms for financial distribution including which should be prioritized, and determine the needs of the vulnerable communities to global warming. There was also a safety net against overconcentration of benefits to certain countries or regions to ensure equitable applications. The approach is scientific, data-based, and should consider the findings of IPCC and studies on indigenous communities. It was part of this mechanism to estimate the recovery and its subsequent requirements.

**Table 1.**

*Continued.*

COP Climate Change Conference Date	Venue		Key Theme
COP25 November 11-22, 2019	Madrid, Spain		The Paris Agreement Rulebook was finalized. COP25 concentrated on climate and energy situations that would keep global temperatures below 1.5°C.
COP26 October 31-November 12, 2021 (the November 9-19, 2020, original schedule was moved due to the COVID-19 pandemic)	Glasgow, United Kingdom		The Glasgow Climate Pact asserted to “phase down” the utilization of coal-fired power stations and accelerate to 0 coalition fossil fuels.
COP27 November 6-20, 2022	Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt		An agreement on Loss and Damage was forged, where rich nations could compensate for the havoc caused by global warming due to their contribution.

(UNFCCC, 2024)

COP has operated under the UNFCCC multilateral treaty since 1992. Its significant value lies in its capacity to bring countries together to review the concerted efforts on climate change, assessing the status of limiting global warming to 1.5 °C as agreed in Paris COP21 (2015), mobilizing public and private sectors in responding together to the impact of climate change, and facilitating nations and communities in coping with the challenges in various spheres of life. (UNFCCC, 2024)

COP has the so-called zones in its discourses and discussions connected to all issues about climate change. The blue zone refers to official meetings, sessions, negotiations, and press conferences. Only official delegates from various nations are allowed, along with admitted observers and accredited media. The green zone is intended as a platform to showcase the positions of civil society and solutions from different sectors on the given issues at hand. It is the host country that determines the space for religious, youth, artists, businesses, regional, and local decision-makers to examine, discuss, and exchange their stands on how to address the problem. In the case of COP28, the UAE opened its doors for creative presentations, poster sessions, round table discussions, and exhibits. (UNFCC, 2024) The green zone can influence those officials since they provided details and



add-on information and data to support any topic debated and analyzed happening in the blue zone.

The writings of Pope Francis supported the initiatives in the green zone. A month before the COP28, which was held in Dubai from November 30-December 12, 2023, Pope Francis released the *Laudate Deum* (October 4, 2023), his apostolic exhortation that unveils his commitment to a sustainable and integrated response to climate change. This is a sequel to his earlier writing on the environment, " *Laudato Si* (2015). Both documents speak about integral ecology, showing the intersection of religion with societal issues that promote quality of life. But *Laudate Deum* is much bolder and specific in its message to walk the talk in addressing climate change issues. Pope Francis positioned his message of inclusivity that goes beyond national borders, where in *Laudate Deum*, he demonstrated that religious leaders could transcend with political leaders when it comes to concerns for the common good. In *Laudate Deum*, he articulated his hope that COP28 will bring light to connect world leaders and make them realize to work for the common home, our earth. (LD5).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The research has the main statement of the problem, which is, "How can the challenges of international politics in COP28 be enlightened by Pope Francis' inclusivity framework?" Its specific objectives are: to identify the major achievements presented by COP28, examine Pope Francis' inclusivity framework, locate the meeting points of COP28 to Pope Francis' inclusivity framework and create ways to deepen the COPs within Pope Francis' integral ecology that involves how the poor countries can be prioritized in the impact of climate change and influence decision-makers the value to take a holistic approach for the sustenance of our common home, our earth.

### **Significance of the Study**

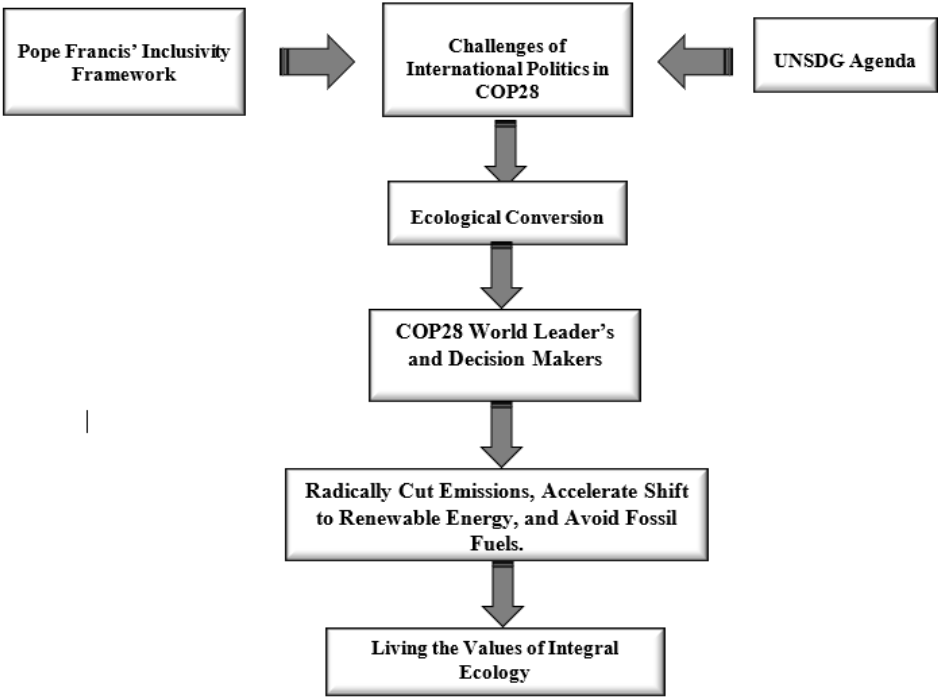
The study is significant both in terms of theory and practice. On a theoretical level, the research shows a discourse analysis of how Pope Francis's inclusivity and integral ecology framework enlightens the challenges of international politics in realizing the Paris Protocol agreements. The concept of social justice penetrates the world system with the bold call of the Pope to not forget the marginalized in climate change issues. On a practical level, Pope Francis's inclusivity paradigm can be a guiding principle in the decision process on how to solidify the loss and damage program and help poor nations cope with the difficulties faced due to global warming.

**Theoretical Framework**

The research utilizes Pope Francis’ integral ecology paradigm using the inclusivity framework drawn from his works *Laudato Si*, *Fratelli Tutti*, and *Laudate Deum*. It offers a holistic approach where it weaves environment, international relations, social justice, economics, and cultural life all together. It aims to work closely with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to bring quality life. Ecological conversion runs through the framework achieved by being inclusive, and work hand in hand as humans to promote well-being for all.

**Figure 1.**

*Pope Francis’s Inclusivity Framework*



As shown in Figure 1, Pope Francis's inclusivity framework aims to influence the decision-making process in COP28, haggling with the international politics where countries advance their national interests. Pope Francis’s inclusivity framework has proven to be effective in synergizing with models of development in coming up with interventions to meet the desired goal for change. An example is A. M. Verhoye’s (2015) research entitled, *Unfreezing the Organizational Culture of the Catholic Church: Case Study of Pope Francis’ Organizational Culture Change Initiative Using the Transformational Leadership Theoretical*

*Framework, " which posited leadership competencies to facilitate a shift in orientation from exclusive cleric-centric to Catholic social teaching-centric solidarity perspective. In this study, Pope Francis's teachings on integral ecology are triangulated with the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda to strengthen its bid for sustainable progress.*

Ecological conversion is targeted to be the by-product of the process in utilizing Pope Francis' inclusivity framework, where world leaders and decision makers in COP28 have the political will to enact the three main themes of COPs: radically cut CO2 emissions, expedite shift to renewable energy, and avoid fossil fuels, obtaining the desired results of 1.5 °C. temperature and below. Given the process, integral ecology shall advance with people harmonizing their care for the environment with spirituality in their ways of living.

**Figure 2.**

*Integrating IPOO Process*

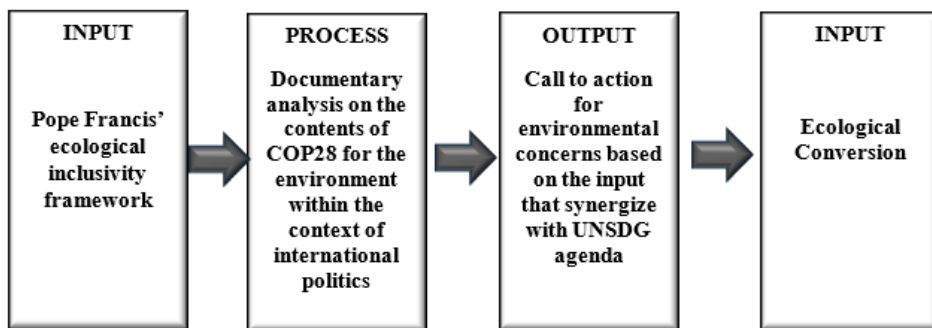


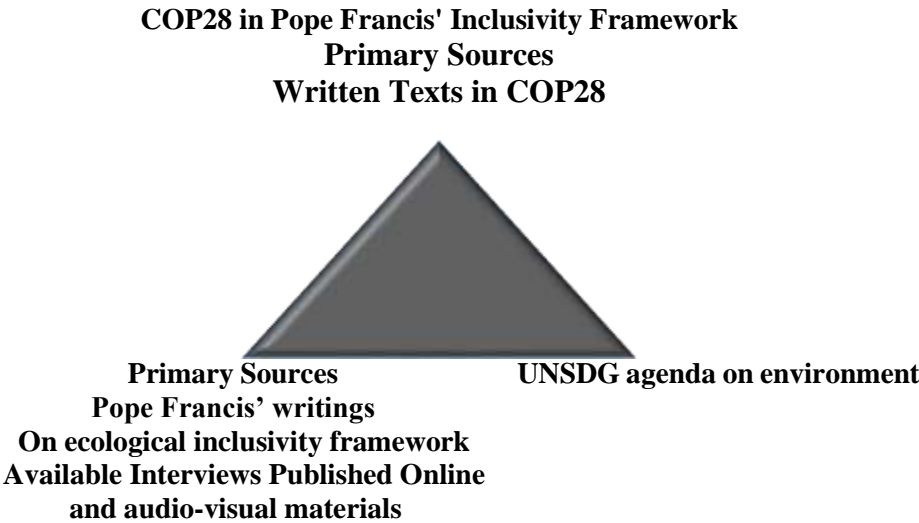
Figure 2 shows the IPOO process where the input (I) is Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework, the process (P) is the documentary analysis on the contents of COP28 for the environment within the context of international politics, the output (O) is the call to action for environmental concerns based on the input that synergize with UNSDG agenda, and the outcome (O) is the ecological conversion.

**Methodology**

The study is qualitative research using documentary analysis (Cresswell, 2013), which employs triangulation methods to facilitate the data mining process in library and e-library works. It puts together primary sources on the proceedings of the conference, writings of Pope Francis on the environment, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda connected to the environment. The scope of the study is within the ambit of how the haggles of international politics, resulting in slowing the realization of COP's goals, have been challenged by Pope Francis' integral ecology paradigm.

**Figure 3.**

*Triangulation Method*



The triangulation method is a validation process it compares various primary sources from the written texts in COP28, Pope Francis' writings on the ecological inclusivity framework, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda on environment. The triangulation approach firms up the arguments by each source by supporting the primary evidence with other primary texts, thereby having a check and balance of the gathered data to be credible and binding.

In the design phase, Pope Francis's Inclusivity framework shall be drawn from his works on the environment in *Laudate Si*, *Fratelli Tutti*, and *Laudate Deum* to analyze the data extracted from the primary sources that transpired during the Dubai COP28. The study limits its scope and delimitation to the international politics in COP28 and Pope Francis's ways of dealing with them to unravel the

realities grappled with in the convention. The data gathering involved data mining from the e-library, online materials, and library works. In data analysis, the framework developed is used to examine the given data within the frame of Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity within the ambit of power dynamics of international politics in realizing the goals of COP28.

### Review of Related Literature

Recent studies about the challenges of climate change and the international politics behind it proved to be important given how it affects the way world leaders address the issue. Closely connected to the research is *The Global Series* (2024) by Farah and Whitman, editors for the book, *which* presents the contradictions going on between the carbon-intensive international normative frameworks prioritizing fossil fuel-based energy production and the promises, pledges, and commitments to balance Earth's ecosystems and biosphere. This is well punctuated in its section, *The Challenge of 'Phasing Out' Fossil Fuels: A Climate-Changing Transition*". The reality is getting harder to eliminate or even diminish the use of fossil fuel since it has a socio-legal basis and a developed hegemonic technical system, hastening impacts on people's way of life. The issue of the use of fossil fuels is a much-debated issue and source of tensions since its reduction and even elimination is the very core theme in COP28 in addressing global warming.

This is also the question of James Henderson (2024) in his *Ten Key Conclusions from COP28: a farewell to fossil fuels?* published by the Oxford Institute of Energy Studies. He cited the paramount value of international cooperation to advance further the agenda of COP, having its ambitious aim to lower the temperature to 1.5 °C. He claimed that political will among world leaders to lessen or stop the use of fossil fuels facilitates adapting to the changing climate and not just mitigating it. This literature is significant to the research since it articulated how COP obliged rich countries to finance the developing countries greatly affected by environmental havoc to help them cope with the challenge in their Loss and Damage Mechanisms.

COP has three major goals: to radically cut emissions, expedite the shift to renewables, and avoid fossil fuels. This is easier said than done since there are much room for maneuvering. China and the US are the top users of fossil fuels (47% combined), and changing their lifestyles proved to be a difficult mission to achieve. China consumed 5.8 tons of hard coal or 140 exajoules, the US with 76, and India 35 (Venditti, 2024).

Given this scenario, Scott Moore (2024) in his article entitled, *Climate Action in the Age of Great Power Rivalry: What Geopolitics Means for the Climate* posited that geopolitics or international order of "territorially based nation-states" whose priority is national security and maximization of resources, is an important

factor in achieving international cooperation. This work speaks about how geopolitical rivalries could be at odds in solving issues of global warming due to competition and trade wars among powerful rival countries. Tensions escalated between the US and China when US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan on August 2, 2022, leading to a suspension in any bilateral agreements, including formal dialogue about climate change. (Haenle and Sher, 2022). The Russian case was different since the narrative is due to its invasion of Ukraine; the economic embargo affected the trading, which resulted in the EU's zero importation of Russian natural gas, which was 40% supply in Europe prior to the conflict. This was like speeding up renewable energy for a decade, and EU emissions decreased to nearly 2.5%. In this article, the geopolitical economy is highlighted as being important in contextualizing international politics in global warming (Moore, 2024).

Ruth and Kalama (2025) analyzed the gap between the current policies agreed in COP28 and the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) using the lenses of G20s in their article entitled, “*Global Environmental Governance Post-COP28: Tracking National Compliance and Policy Implementation in G20 Countries*”. This article is connected to the study since it exposed how international politics can derail the roadmap in the phase from negotiation to implementation. There is a great challenge to match words with action since developed countries, mostly members of the G20, have prioritized their national interests. There are major pitfalls in the COP28 consensus, including a lack of legal accountability, issues of transparency and data gaps, finance delivery, and policy reversals. It will take a political will to walk the talk, and this is where the moral responsibility comes in to influence each country's contribution.

Pope Francis has been conscious of the realities of international rivalries and geopolitical problems that affected discussions connected to climate change. When COP28 was fast approaching, he took the opportunity to speak about his concern about the need to walk the talk on the concerns for the environment, since agreed action plans are hampered by these tensions. This is captured in his *Laudate Deum*, where the framework of inclusivity was presented. Piscos (2024) in his study, “*How Green Do We Have to Be?*” *Reading Laudate Deum in the Lenses of Inclusivity* traced the development of the Pope's concepts from his *Laudati Si* (2015), *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), to *Laudate Deum* (2023). It calls for unity and concerted effort beyond national borders and gathers everyone to share our common home, regardless of differences. The work has a direct link to the research since it pursues Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework based on his recent encyclicals on the environment. *Laudate Deum* served as an appeal to the international delegates and world leaders engaged in COP28 to ponder the serious condition of the planet. While the world enjoys technological advancement and innovation, it is prone to forgetting that everything has limits. Sturiale et al (2024), in their article entitled, *The Apostolic Exhortation 'Laudate Deum': a Technocratic vs. Ecological-Integral Approach for a Solidarity-Based and Sustainable Economy*

examine how the Pope's exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, pushes for a solidarity-based economy and a shift in paradigm from technocentric to ecological-integral approach. Sturiale and company noted the main point that the climate crisis also means a food crisis. Thus, the time is ripe to reduce and eventually eliminate the main causes of global warming, which are fossil fuels, be it gas, oil, or coal. If we want a globally sustainable economy where there is food security, then the collective efforts to save the earth are an imperative task.

The Review of Related Literature (RRL) presents a wide range of themes on climate change, international cooperation, and geopolitical impact. However, there is still a need for more studies on how the Pope's ecological inclusivity paradigm may influence and create ripple effects on COP28 and the ways to walk the talk on matters that concern climate change. The research gap is on how the challenges of international politics in COP28 can be enlightened by Pope Francis's inclusivity framework.

## **Results and Discussion**

The United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 28, held in Dubai, UAE, on November 30 to December 13, 2023, was the largest, with 85,000 attendees, including 150 heads of state, country delegates, business, civil society, indigenous people, youth, and international organizations (UNFCCC, 2023). COP28 targets to cut emissions based on the COP21 agreement in Paris in 2015, accelerate the shift to renewables, and avoid fossil fuels. As a crucial framework under UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement targets global warming to below 2°C and an ambition of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. But more than these goals are their reviews of whether there are developments in various streams connected to climate change. These are on how vulnerable communities in developing countries cope with the impact of climate change and how the loss and damage facility aided them, the global goal to finance poor countries in facing climate change challenges, and achieve the goals previously mentioned to close the gap (UNFCCC, 2023).

### **COP28 Achievements Amid the Tensions of International Politics**

The major achievements of COP28 are the agreements of countries to do their share in transitioning from fossil fuels, the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Just Transition Work Program (JTWP), the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) in its full swing of operation and the Global Stocktake that will measure the status if Paris Agreements have been fulfilled along with its recommendations on how to improve the situation. The resolution in transitioning from fossil fuel to radically cut emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and expediting the shift to renewable energy has been hampered by international politics in realizing them. COP28 confronted this concern by an agreement known as the UAE consensus that acknowledged the importance of global transition and set a target for renewable energy. Such

accomplishments created provisions to solidify resilience that direct its climate action with the conservation of nature. Most of all, it made nations pledge to hit the aim for net-zero emissions by 2050 and commit to triple renewable energy and achieve efficiency two times faster by 2030. (UNFCCC, 2024)

During COP28, the Global Stocktake was concluded. Global Stocktake is like a barometer to check the advancement of the 2015 (COP21) Paris Climate Change Agreement, which articulated how countries agreed to cut their emissions. As a crucial framework under UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement aims for global warming to be below 2°C and with an ambition of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reinforced this stand. Global Stocktake tracks how countries performed exceeding 1.5 °C or not, and the monitoring results can lay out solutions and tools for achieving the articulated goals. To achieve the desired goal of global warming to not more than 1.5°C means the reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) to 45% by the year 2030 and reaching zero GHG removal from the atmosphere by the year 2050. COP 28 is a deadline if COP can do it, and through the Global Stocktake, interventions were drafted to hit the aim by the year 2025. Global Stocktake revealed the slow snail pace of the initiatives due to the lack of political will by rich countries to enact what has been promised. Tools were provided to work it out, but the urgency to execute it has been hampered by the major factors of countries to keep their economic and financial interests (UNFCCC, 2023).

During COP28, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) remains unclear on how to finance poor countries in mitigating and adapting to the challenges of climate change, just like in recent years. GCF has been struggling to finance the operation of the Loss and Damage Fund, where it cannot even meet the required \$1 billion per year to aid nations hit by global warming. International politics played a key role in implementing the agreements since national leaders protect their economic agenda, prompting policy reversals and no non-delivery of financial contributions for climate change. Such is the case of the United States when President Donald Trump pulled the plug on and reversed decisions in support of fossil fuels. In his first executive order on global environmental deals, he said that *“it is the policy of my administration to put the interests of the United States and the American people first in the development and negotiation of any international agreements with the potential to damage or stifle the American economy.”* (Climate Home News, 2025). Since the scheme for burden-sharing for the GCF is still in progress, the US withdrawal has given more weight to its European counterparts in dealing with financial issues. When President Trump halted contributions to UNFCCC, it fell short of its budget by 22%. In 2024, the US gave \$13.3 million (Climate Home News, 2025).

The Loss and Damage Fund is designed to work within the ambit of climate justice, where it is aimed at compensating for irreversible damage and adverse impact on poor nations due to global warming. This was considered a milestone in COP27, held in Sharm el-Sheikh (2022) in Egypt. COP28 carries the



responsibility to operationalize it. But international politics, seen in the political will for each country to take responsibility and subsequent funding gaps, remain a problem. The main argument is that climate change is not just a biophysical reality but a phenomenon that intersects the moral, cultural, and social life of human communities. When the vulnerabilities of certain groups are at stake, justice is to be sought from the harmful action of powerful nations (Kumar, 2024). In COP28, UNFCCC negotiated with developed countries to agree on compensation and reparations to affected communities heavily hit by climate change. Those who are devastated by extreme weather events like typhoons, drought, extreme heat, and sea level rise are examples of conditions that should be aided by the program. But the manner in which the mechanism of loss and damage funds is delivered is still subject to debates and discourses. Meanwhile, the Global South mostly suffered the adverse effects of climate change, where the use of fossil fuels is a major factor in the production of global greenhouse gas (GHG). Ironically, the US is one of the top users of fossil fuel with 140 exajoules a year (Venditti, 2024), and recently withdrew its financial support to global climate action (Climate Home News, 2025).

The Just Transition Work Program (JTWP) is one of the best features of COP28 since it has shifted the UNFCCC paradigm from being abstract to concrete ways of how to include everyone in the shift away from fossil fuels. In congruence with the UNSDG, the JTWP ensures that no one is left behind, which involves the integration of vulnerable communities, gender, equity, and indigenous rights. It assures equitable energy transition, especially among poor countries, and helps in effective transition to renewable energy through dialogue and collaboration. JTWP promotes a climate-resilient future while diminishing inequality in the global community. It opened doors for dialogue, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing from the international to local, uplifting affected villages. JTWP is taking a people-centered approach in its climate action style. Countries affiliated with UNFCCC are in unison that a move to renewable energy signifies a shift towards climate justice and greater equity. Clean energy is for all and should not be exclusive to the powerful few (Yu, 2024).

International Politics deals with the influence and the dynamics of power, cooperation, conflict and diplomatic relations among nations. A status check of the climate action spearheaded by the UNFCCC through COP28 reveals that the current state has been a far cry from the requirements set by COP28. International politics is crucial for its realization, given that most countries prioritize their national interests over the global common good.

## Reading COP28 in Pope Francis' Ecological Inclusivity Framework

### *Pope Francis' Ecological Inclusivity Framework and Integral Ecology*

Pope Francis has been aware of these tendencies of countries to put their country first over the common good. But his emphasis on inclusivity underscores how religion intersects with societal issues that advance a holistic life. The themes of integral ecology and interconnectedness of all beings are well articulated in his encyclicals, *Laudate Si* (2015), *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), and *Laudate Deum* (2023). These Papal writings proclaimed the message of harmony, sustainable growth, and quality of life through inclusivity and integral ecology. To unravel Pope Francis' ecological *inclusivity* framework means to unite all forms of life and preserve the common home, our earth. Nobody should be left behind, be it any kind of life form (humans, animals, plants), marginalized communities, or those who are excluded from society. His teachings resonate with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals because they have meeting points in how life should be protected and dignified. With such a paradigm, Pope Francis has set the tone of COP28 to take his urgent agenda of social justice that promotes welfare for all and find its way into the COP28 program. He articulated his desire for how COP28 can bring integral ecology to his *Laudate Deum* (chapter 5), where delegates should go beyond national interests and individualism. He called world leaders to show passion and compassion to work on what should be done (LD 56). This document has a more forceful drive than *Laudato Si* since he witnessed how slow it is to walk and talk, and ended in almost a breakdown. *Laudate Deum* is a bold and more concrete action to advance clean energy sources and stop the use of fossil fuels (LD 55). Pope Francis is very optimistic that COP28 will be like a spring of hope despite the successive failures that happened from the time he wrote "*Laudato Si*" in 2015. Pope Francis challenged the rich countries, which have the categories of WEIRD or Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic, to honor the dignity of life regardless of territorial background.

### *Pope Francis' Ecological Inclusivity Framework Amid International Politics*

Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework challenges leaders from each country to have the political will to think globally and work for the common home. In his *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), he advocated for neighbors without borders by demonstrating how the gospel calls for it in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (FT chapter 2) and his actual practice by having a genuine dialogue and conversation with the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb (2019) in Dubai. His agenda of social friendship is based on justice, which is anchored in mutual respect and open conversation regardless of race, social status, gender, and religion (FT no. 5). Their meeting led to the signing of a document entitled "*Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together*" (2019). In Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework, he inspires people to unite and work together for the common home. *Laudati Si*'s description of the throw-away culture has been enriched in *Fratelli Tutti* by stating that "*what is thrown away are not only food and disposable*

*objects, but often human beings themselves*” (FT #19). This was dramatically embodied by the 3-year-old Syrian Boy, Alan Kurdi, whose body washed ashore in Turkey in 2015, drawing global attention to the plight of refugees. This mindset to go against the exclusion of people that destroys the dignity of every human being has been carried on to *Laudate Deum*, applied in the context of convincing political leaders around the globe to work for inclusivity and justice as a basis for any global climate action initiative.

Pope Francis reinforced his inclusivity framework by convening the Synodality in the Church (2021) with a slogan of “*communion, participation, mission*” (Synod of Bishops, 2021). In his opening message during the Synod of Synodality, he tackled how “*Jesus’ gaze seeks communion with awe and humility*” and inspired an attitude and character to not let anyone left behind. (Pope Francis, 2023).

COP28, with its Just Transition Work Program, ensures that everyone’s concerns are included in moving away from the use of fossil fuels to renewable energy. Collaboration of nations for knowledge-sharing and sharing of technical know-how from the international to the local, enabling marginalized and vulnerable communities. When this people-centered model is implemented along with the deeper insight of Pope Francis’s inclusivity, then the world advances into a more humane yet progressive society.

But such reality is strong on paper, and still weak to unfold on its fullest scale in actual experiences. This is where *Laude Deum*’s forceful message challenges the environmental destruction that has been going on, which has impacted poorer countries. In this encyclical, Pope Francis is concrete in showing how this massive environmental degradation occurred, caused by the comfortable lifestyle of the WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). He challenged world leaders and decision makers to bring their nations to ecological conversion. In *Laudate Deum*, Pope Francis questioned the growing technocratic problem (LD 20-33) where technological advancement failed to link conscience and human responsibility (LD 21). He cautioned that technological innovations and artificial intelligence (AI) have managed to turn people into greatness, living their lives without limits. This mindset is dangerous since it leads to the disintegration of values and disconnects from various spheres in life. He called it “*monstrously feeds upon itself* (LD 21) since such a worldview brings them power to dominate. This propels lust for wealth, influence, and control. In the end, there will be more marginalization and discrimination.

### ***Pope Francis’ Ecological Conversion and Social Justice***

Pope Francis’ *Laudati Si* (2015) resonates with St. John Paul II’s (2001) meaning of ecological conversion, where it is an “*effect of one’s encounter with Jesus evident in the relationship with the world around them.*” Pope Francis reiterated that to heal the common home, the human heart needs to be healed first. (LS 217). In ecological conversion, there are paradigm shifts in worldviews,

cultural practices, and spirituality. To change worldview is to heed the urgent demand to cultivate an ecological conscience that realizes the interconnectedness of everything in all creation. Cultural transformation happens when ways are changed from exploiting nature to being stewards of it. Kureethadam (2015), the head of the Vatican's Ecological and Creation Office, mentioned in his work, *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'*, that spirituality comes when there are holistic and sustainable actions. It means a call to return to the Creator in a humble and sincere spirit of repentance and recognizing God as the source of all things. Ecological conversion is a transformation to go back to creation itself and become caring and responsible stewards. (Kureethadam, 2015).

Pope Francis works for social justice, where he offers the model of how it is to live the values of integral ecology that highlights how the cry of the earth is also the cry of the poor. Pope Francis's ecological inclusivity framework integrates ecological economics, ecological education, and community engagement that increase participation and concerted action. Pope Francis invited everyone to adopt a simple lifestyle and imbibe ecological spirituality (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2020).

Pope Francis's inclusion of COP28 in his writing, *Laudate Deum* (LD 5), is a testament to his program of integral ecology that is anchored to social justice. Following the path of his inspiration, St. Francis, Pope Francis served as a prophetic voice to harmonize everything and everyone to be "*brothers and sisters*" (Fratelli Tutti #1) just like how St. Francis called it, "*brother sun and sister moon*." Pope Francis shared his reflections that global disaster is a by-product of how humans acted like gods and the way they use resources as if it has no limits. In His *Laudate Deum*, he made an implicit and subtle yet impactful critique of how, in the past, COPs participants still emphasized upholding national interests at the expense of the universal global common good (LD 52). In *Laudate Deum* chapters 4 and 5, Pope Francis emphatically showed the progress and failures of climate conferences. He traced the development of UNFCCC since its inception in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro to COP27. He fearlessly cited how high expectations failed due to the lack of political will. In LD chapter 3, he articulated the weakness of international politics (LD 34-43), and the flaws connected to diplomatic relations that led to greater individualism. There was a shared roadmap to achieve the goals, but it has diminished its effectiveness when national interests played a bigger role. As a result, there was also a lack of clarity about how sanctions can be executed if countries do not abide by the agreement. Such loopholes provided the gray area where international politics worked in favor of each country's agenda rather than the universally accepted principles for collaboration.

Pope Francis's last book, *Hope, The Autobiography* (2025), which encapsulated his yearning for a better humanity anchored on social justice. In his personal story, he narrated the need for hope despite failures and contradictions. In the last portion of his account, he keeps on saying to "*find cheer in the gaze of the child, and in the infinite possibilities of goodness, so long as we allow mercy to dwell within us.*" (p. 289). To recall, this was also the reason why he keeps on

harping on the interconnectedness of everything as he drumbeats expectation in COP28 that it can deliver in chapter 5 of *Laudate Deum*. He inspires participants to find directions in walking the talk. But more than anything else, he provided the depth of all integral ecological initiatives by bringing us spiritual motivations (LD 6). This reminds us that greening the planet is not merely physical, but an integral harmony with the core of our humanity, the respect for each person's dignity, and the promotion of social justice that includes everyone for the common good. International politics have a tendencies to divide, but Pope Francis call is to unite and harmonize after all we are all neighbors and share a common home, our mother earth.

***Meeting Points of Pope Francis' Ecological Inclusivity Framework  
and UNSDG's Agenda on Environment***

Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework resonated with UNSDG's agenda in the promotion of quality life within the ambit of holistic growth. His advocacy reflects UNSDG's theme of holistic growth, poverty reduction and nobody left behind. His social friendship is a universal welcome signaling culture of care (*Fratelli Tutti*). It directly enriches and supports SDG 1 (No Poverty) & SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), where he condemns the economy of exclusion and fights to end disparity and gaps of people connected to poverty and exploitation.

The refusal of WEIRD countries and rich nations to realize the COP agenda means derailing the road to equal opportunities, and such power dynamics connected to international politics on climate change hamper the progress to achieve SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). *Laudati Si* (2015) and *Laudate Deum* (2023) articulated Pope Francis' concrete actions on global warming. In these works, he criticized the lack of political will by rich countries to address issues of climate change through fossil fuel reduction, which echoes the urgency of SDG 13 (Climate Action).

Pope Francis' ecological inclusivity framework reminds countries haggling in international politics in implementing the COP agreements in 2015 and elaborated in COP28, promotes SDG 5 (Gender Equality), as women in poor countries suffer the impact of the climate crisis. The push for inclusivity hits SDG 4 (Quality Education), where it aims to achieve equitable quality education for all which tackles integral ecology for the well-being of everyone. Pope Francis' voice to protect the earth as our home promotes SDG 15 (Life on Land) & SDG 14 (Life Below Water) since it tackles the safety of biodiversity, indigenous people, ecosystems, and natural world. (UNSDG 14 and 15).

## Conclusion

Hope springs in the language of Pope Francis's inclusivity framework since all life forms are part of the plan. His voice serves as a prophetic reminder that despite differences, people of the world can work together as one to save the planet. Before COP28, there were 27 COPs that offered promising solutions to address the climate crisis. Most of them failed due to the divisiveness of international politics, prioritizing national agenda and interests over the common good. Pope Francis saw hope in COP28 in Dubai since in COP27, there was a drumbeat to bring back the aspirations of the Paris 2015 agreement (COP21) to radically cut emissions, expedite the shift to renewable energy, and, as much as possible, avoid fossil fuels to limit global warming to 1.5 °C and below. It was true to its form when COP 28 accomplished the strengthening of the Loss and Damage Fund with concrete standards of measuring the performance of each nation through the Global Stocktake. The Just Transition Work Program added the aspiration to walk the talk by not allowing anyone to be left behind in the gradual shift to renewable energy. The deal among nations to collaborate in helping poor countries through knowledge-sharing and technical know-how assured a greater chance that the shift to renewable energy from fossil fuels can effectively take place.

However, in international politics, there is a haggle to protect national economic interests, as in the case of US President Trump, who posed a bigger challenge to expedite the agreement on global climate action. Pope Francis encouraged us that, despite the setbacks, hope still springs, since a spark of goodness is vibrant enough to make a difference in a better world. Hope springs eternal, since when it is anchored to social justice, it also strengthens the bid to live the values of integral ecology. This is what Pope Francis referred to in his inclusivity language from *Laudato Si*, *Fratelli Tutti*, and *Laudate Deum*. Indeed, in the collective global climate action towards the promotion of a holistic life, Pope Francis's teachings synchronize with the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda. With such hope, we keep our prayers for the vibrance of goodness to continue. In it, we say, Praise Be to You (*Laudati Si*), we are all brothers and sisters (*Fratelli Tutti*), and Praise God (*Laudate Deum*).

As stewards of God's creation, it is imperative to support local environmental policies that are concrete manifestations of Pope Francis' inclusivity framework that continuously search for solutions to fight climate change.

## Recommendation

Scholars and researchers may pursue empirical studies on the encyclicals of Pope Francis regarding care for the environment, advocacies for environmental protection, and themes connected to how integral ecology can be integrated into corporate social responsibility (CSR).

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An examination of how various countries perceive the COP agreements can be another area of investigation, especially those most impacted by climate change. This can include the incorporation of testimonials from environmental organizations, scientists, and vulnerable communities. The area of how public opinion and activism affect political decisions at both local and global levels can be another interesting topic to examine. Integral ecology, green politics, and social justice are a wide array of subjects that created vibrance in pursuing further inquiry in the field.

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