

Faith Community Calls on US Banks to Cease Fossil Fuel Financing

October 20, 2017

It is now abundantly clear that planetary warming is and will continue producing apocalyptic hurricanes, uncontrollable wildfires, life-denying droughts, unbearable heat, epic floods, and now, inevitable sea level rise — just as scientists have been predicting for decades. There can no longer be any doubt, except among those who choose to deny the facts. The anguish and devastation of recent extreme weather events at home and across the globe shock the imagination.

To ignore reality and endeavor to proceed full-speed ahead with the very practices causing this destruction is as irrational as it is patently immoral. It would signify a deliberate attempt against life systems that currently hang by a thread — inconceivable for any logical being.

And yet we see great political and economic powers determined to do precisely that, blinded by the lust for profit at any cost. Short-term gain that results in irreparable suffering and misery cannot be countenanced on a human level nor in our shared convictions as persons of faith.

As leaders of major financial institutions you play a pivotal role in determining the fate of this earth. You can choose to continue to provide funding and incentives for activities that imperil life, or you could place the resources you control at the service of a livable future.

Investing in fossil fuels is not only an injustice against all of Creation but is economic folly. They represent a dying industry and one whose costs cannot be sustained. Indeed, the human tide rising against them is shifting the focus to life-giving energy sources, to the rational choice of renewables, which assures business sense and a more just world.

Signatories of the June 2013 Equator Principles, now numbering 91 financial institutions spanning 37 countries, agreed that project finance would:

“...ensure that the Projects we finance and advise on are developed in a manner that is socially responsible and reflects sound environmental management practices. We recognise the importance of climate change, biodiversity, and human rights, and believe negative impacts on project-affected ecosystems, communities, and the climate should be avoided where possible...

We believe that adoption of and adherence to the Equator Principles offers significant benefits to us, our clients, and local stakeholders through our clients' engagement with locally Affected Communities. We therefore recognise that our role as financiers affords us opportunities to promote responsible environmental stewardship and socially responsible development, including fulfilling our responsibility to respect human rights by undertaking due diligence in accordance with the Equator Principles."

(The Equator Principles, June 2013, Preamble, p. 2;
http://www.equator-principles.com/resources/equator_principles_III.pdf)

As Equator Principles Financial Institutions (EPFIs) and U.S. banks, it is incumbent upon you to uphold these principles. We therefore are compelled to call upon you to redirect your efforts away from deadly fossil fuels and instead invest in life-promoting renewable energy. Banks were created to serve the public interest, and it is the community's funds that constitute your reserves. They must be invested wisely and to benefit the common good. An increasing number of persons and institutions are divesting from organizations that support fossil fuels. Some 798 institutions and 58,000 individuals worldwide—from faith-based to educational to local governments—have divested their assets; this month alone an additional 40 Catholic institutions did likewise. To date, over \$5.53 trillion dollars have been moved out of the sector. And municipalities across the country are now being asked to join the three U.S. cities which have already withdrawn their funds from banks that finance fossil fuels.

The accelerating climate crisis presents a moral imperative for urgent action to preserve a climate-stable world. It is ultimately in all of our best interests. We are heartened by BNP Paribas' recent decision to halt funding for shale or oil sands projects, as well as their transport, i.e. pipelines. As you enter the 2017 Equator Principles gathering, you have a choice before you. We urge you to choose life.

Sincerely,