



Building Climate Resilience Legislation



Background, Rationale & Concept

Extreme weather threatens lives and livelihoods world-wide. The unprecedented intensity of floods, fires, and hurricanes is hitting hardest those least able to recover. These disasters demand a united response rather than the politics of inertia or blame. Building climate resilience requires complementing mitigation with adaptation to cope with the additional heating of the planet in the coming decades. To catalyze mitigation and adaptation, we need to enable societal transformation. The challenge is not only to survive the devastating impacts of climate change but also to thrive and evolve into a sustainable way of living. We must broaden the current approach and dominant focus beyond mitigation to climate resilience. Mitigation is the central cornerstone of climate action, but since the risk landscape is already changing due to climate shocks, we need to build adaptation and resilience. Building resilience consists of the following actions:

- Anticipate threats and risks;
- Prepare for threats and risks;
- Respond to threats and risks; and
- Recover and rebound from threats and risks.

Mitigation, Adaptation, and Societal Transformation (MAST) form the three pillars of the PAS/PASS framework for building Climate Resilience:

- **Mitigation:** Mitigation to bend the GHG emissions curve downward now and reach climate neutrality by 2050, to limit the warming to below 2°C is the first Pillar of MAST.

- **Adaptation:** Adaptation to unavoidable climate change is the second pillar of MAST. It involves reducing sensitivity to climate change, reducing exposure to climate threats, and enhancing adaptive capacity. Adaptation must start at the local level, a city, a village, a state and scale upwards to an entire nation.
- **Societal Transformation:** Societal transformation to a sustainable way of living is essential for both reducing the anthropogenic perturbations (bend the curve) and for thriving despite the climate impacts. Societal Transformation involves fundamental shifts in values, behavior, and governance of socio-economic systems. In Pope Francis' words, "This transformation is akin to an ecological conversion."

PAS/PASS Initiative: Climate Resilience and Scope for Cooperation on Regional Summits

A series of initiatives on climate policies and the climate crisis, organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (PAS) and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences (PASS), have paved the way for a significant transdisciplinary alliance between climate science, social science, policy, faith-based communities, and civil society.

- The Faith and Science initiative by the Vatican, in which PAS mobilized science communities, and the Governments of the UK and Italy shaped the COP agenda in Glasgow and helped bring issues of water, food and agriculture for the first time high on the agenda of the COP in Sharm el Cheikh.
- In July of 2022, PAS organized a meeting of experts, at which the MAST concept for resilience was first proposed and accepted by all the experts attending the meeting in a conference declaration. This led to the realization that resilience must be built at the local level of cities and states: <https://www.pas.va/en/publications/scripta-varia/sv152pas.html>
- A Global Summit was organized jointly by PAS and PASS during May 15-17, 2024, assembling mayors and governors from all hemispheres to discuss and showcase innovative solutions for climate resilience. The outcome of the summit was a Planetary Call to Action for Climate Change Resilience (Pope Francis, Ramanathan, V; Suárez-Orozco, M; von Braun, J; Alford, H; Turkson, P; and 15 other authors by PAS and PASS, signed by attendees, including all the attending Mayors and Governors). The document recognizes that the climate crisis is already upon us. It also acknowledges the need for a new, expanded approach that adds adaptation and societal transformation to emissions mitigation to protect people and ecosystems. We endeavor to foster adaptation and societal transformation within a global framework that is also deeply rooted in the local level. To support implementation, we designed series of ten regional summits across all hemispheres.
- The regional summits advance the Call to Action for a universal protocol of resilience, as Pope Francis called it in his speech on May 16, 2024, to the global resilience summit attendees: "I commend the two Academies for producing a universal protocol of resilience." PAS/PASS have already organized regional summits in California, Boston, Nairobi, Vienna, Brasilia, Rome and Senegal, with summits planned for India and Southeast Asia & the Pacific. We aim to culminate in a final comprehensive Vatican Summit in 2027 and the release of a Universal

Protocol for Climate Resilience.

Overview

As part of a global series of regional climate summits, this one-day workshop at the Casina Pio IV in the Vatican Gardens will focus on the practical realities of drafting, passing, and implementing climate resilience legislation. It will serve as a strategic bridge between local legislative success stories and the global dialogue culminating at the final convening at the Vatican.

Purpose

This workshop will convene experienced legislators, emerging political leaders, policy experts, and judges to share concrete examples of how climate resilience laws, codified and customary, have been successfully passed and implemented—and what lessons can be applied across jurisdictions. Our goal is to learn from success stories that have gone beyond theory and into effective political and legislative action. We thus heed the urgent call from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV: “It is time to move from words to action.”

Format & Focus

- Legislative Testimonies:

Elected officials and policymakers from regions where we are hosting global summits will share firsthand accounts of the political strategies that helped them pass effective climate resilience laws.

- Intergenerational Dialogue:

Sessions will match veteran lawmakers with young legislators and political leaders, encouraging cross-generational collaboration and showcasing innovative ideas from a new generation of policymakers.

- Best Practice Case Studies:

Focused presentations on legislative achievements—including adaptation finance, disaster-resilient infrastructure, early warning systems, community-led resilience planning, and economic development—will serve as actionable models for replication.

- Policy Implementation Lab:

Substantive dialogue that explores how climate laws are translated into effective programs on the ground—addressing governance, funding, and accountability challenges.

- Participants

Senior and early-career legislators from states and cities represented in the global summit

series; Policy experts, advisors, and legal scholars; Climate advocates and youth leaders; Faith representatives.

Outcomes

- A cross-regional portfolio of legislative models and implementation strategies
- An intergenerational climate legislation network
- Contributions to the MAST initiative—advancing global education and action on Mitigation, Adaptation and Societal Transformation.

This summit reinforces our shared commitment: climate resilience is not only possible—it is already happening. By learning from those who have succeeded, we equip ourselves and our communities to act with an ethic of urgency, courage, and compassion.