**SIRTS International Congress**

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**“Social systems and family systems between crisis and development”**

**‘The systemic crisis of climate change: clinical and political reflections’\***

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**Abstract:**

*‘the unit of survival is organism plus environment’ . . . ‘we are learning by bitter experience that the organism which destroys its environment destroys itself.'* Gregory Bateson.

*“posterity is the main ‘client’ of the contextual therapist, the vulnerable ‘other’ towards which each of us is accountable.’’* Catherine DuCommun-Nagy.

The overarching crisis of the 21st century is the human-induced change of the climate system and its consequences. It is an ecological, political, moral and health crisis of unprecedented scale. It threatens every aspect of our lives, the future of our civilisation and the poorest populations are most at risk although least responsible for the causes.

Systemic thinkers and practitioners ought to be well placed to comprehend the scale, complexity and potential of this systemic crisis. Climate science is a systemic science.

Unfortunately in spite of the declarations of the WHO, the Lancet and other health organisations there is little evidence that the health professions are responding with any more urgency than other sectors to this escalating and unprecedented threat to global health, well-being and survival.

In his powerful and eloquent encyclical, *Laudato Si.* Pope Francis has added his voice to the call to acknowledge the ‘Cry of the Earth’ and the ‘Cry of the Poor’. The world’s leaders meet in Paris in December to forge a new climate agreement. The prospects for an effective outcome are not good.

The consequences of failure are potentially catastrophic for the next and future generations.

This presentation will seek to enlist systemic health practitioners and their organisations in a more engaged and explicit campaign to address the reality of climate change and to mitigate its potential for massive negative health effects particularly amongst the most vulnerable and impoverished populations.

\*Published in 2013 in *Feedback*: Journal of the Family Therapy Association of Ireland. Previously presented in various forms in Krakow, Cardiff, Paris, Dublin, Berlin and Belgrade.