

Climate Change and the World Council of Churches



Background information
November 2008

This dossier “Climate Change and the World Council of Churches” summarizes the work the WCC has been doing in relationship to climate change and includes some of the recent documents of the WCC and Christian churches in relationship to the topic.

The first document is based on Dr. David G. Hallman’s “The WCC Climate Change Programme – History, lessons and challenges”, published in the booklet *Climate change*, Geneva, WCC 2006, distributed at the 9th Assembly of the WCC in Porto Alegre. The work of the WCC on Climate Change would not have been possible without the pioneering commitment, insights and initiatives of David. David, together with consultants and the Working Group on Climate Change have strongly supported the WCC staff and have played a key role in mainstreaming climate change concerns in the churches’ agenda. To David, our colleague in the WCC, Rev. Dr. Martin Robra, consultants and the Working Group, our deep gratitude.

Following documents show recent policy positions and other documents from the Ecumenical Patriarch, regional ecumenical organizations and churches from different parts of the world.

We kindly invite the reader to look for the WCC work on Climate Change and related topics at the WCC website: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/climate-change-and-water.html>

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The World Council of Churches and Climate Change¹

November 2008

Summary

Climate change has become an issue of major concern for the world today. Scientific data clearly shows the impact of human action on climate change. Some regions of the world are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Therefore there is an urgent need to further develop comprehensive policies to promote adaptation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions. At the same time strong mitigation measures (especially through the reduction of CO₂ emissions) should be taken to prevent further increasing global warming.

The WCC policy on climate change clearly states the different dimensions of the climate change crisis (ecological, social, economic, political and ethical) and stresses climate change as a matter of justice, as “those who are and will increasingly be affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the global South who are much more dependant on natural resources for their subsistence and do not have the means to adapt to the change” (Minute on global warming and climate change, Central Committee, Geneva February 2008).

In doing so, the WCC echoes what churches all over the world have stated over the last two decades. For instance, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople has played a leadership role advocating for the care of creation, involving the scientific community, including its concerns in education curricula and calling, already on September 1989, to observe September 1st (the beginning of the liturgical year in the Orthodox Church) as creation day. This call was reiterated by the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, meeting in Romania in September 2007. Also in September 2007, the 9th assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches called on the churches in the Pacific to advocate for “a regional immigration policy giving citizens of countries most affected by climate change (...) rights to resettlement in other Pacific island nations”, and on the global ecumenical family to support this initiative. Churches and specialized ministries in northern countries are strongly advocating for the clear implementation of mitigation and adaptation programmes in their home countries and in the international cooperation schemes. Their advocacy work has been nurtured by the Greenhouse Development Rights (GDRs)² which has become an framework to support an emergency climate stabilization programme, while, at the same time, preserving the right of all people to reach a dignified level of sustainable human development free of the privations of poverty.

WCC's and the ecumenical movement policies and actions on climate change are rooted in the Bible which teaches the wholeness of creation. Life is created, sustained and made whole by the power of God's Holy Spirit (Genesis 1; Romans 8). God provided all creatures

¹ This section is largely based on the article by Dr. David G. Hallman, [The WCC Climate Change Programme – History, lessons and challenges](#) in the booklet *Climate Change*, Geneva, WCC 2006. This booklet was distributed in Porto Alegre at the 8th WCC Assembly. Dr. Guillermo Kerber wrote the present summary and edited the text to include recent WCC policy statements and actions on Climate Change.

² Cf. e.g. the Executive Summary (October 2008) of *The Greenhouse Development Rights Framework*, at http://www.ecoequity.org/GDRs/GDRs_ExecSummary.html

with the conditions to live life as it is meant to be, in a specific relation towards one another. God creates human beings out of the dust of the earth (Genesis 2) and charges humanity to care for the earth, to be stewards of it (Genesis 1:28), since humanity is not the master of the earth but steward to responsibly care for the integrity of creation. God wondrously and lovingly created a world with more than enough resources to sustain generations upon generations of human beings and other living creatures. But humanity is not always faithful in its stewardship. Sin breaks relationships among humankind and with the created order (Genesis 3 and 4; Jeremiah 14, Hosea 4:1-3). Bearing the marks of human sin, “creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God” (Romans 8:19).

When creation is threatened by climate change churches and the ecumenical movement at large are called to speak out and act as an expression of their commitment to life, justice and love.

Introduction

The World Council of Churches has a long history of work on climate change. In the ecumenical understanding, human induced climate change is being precipitated primarily by the current development pattern with the prevailing economic strategy of promoting endless growth and production of goods and the high consumption lifestyles of the richer industrialized nations and wealthy elites throughout the world. Such development, economic and consumption patterns are leading to the depletion of critical natural resources with life-threatening consequences for impoverished nations, low-lying island states, and future generations. Climate change is thus a matter of justice, of international justice and inter-generational justice

The ecumenical work on climate change has encompassed ethical and theological reflection, resource development and distribution, advocacy at the international and national levels, and solidarity and accompaniment with churches in areas already experiencing the impact of human induced climate change

The World Council of Churches has carried on its climate change work in strong collaboration with member churches and specialized ministries, building networks of engaged people in every region; partnering with national councils and regional ecumenical organisations in advocacy; consulting with scientific, economic, political and technical expertise on climate change within an ethical framework; utilizing electronic communication to mobilize and sustain networks; and linking to other interested actors within the ecumenical family

A bit of history

The World Council of Churches work on Climate Change has benefited from a rich history of reflection and action within the ecumenical world regarding the inter-connections of ecological sustainability and social justice. Though the terminology has varied, the issues have been quite consistent: What are the basic elements that are required for people to live lives characterised by health, social justice, ecological sustainability, security and spiritual fulfilment i.e. how would we describe what would constitute a “sustainable

community”, locally and globally? What insights do we gain about basic principles for sustainable community from Biblical, theological and ethical reflection? What are the economic, political, social, environmental, and military impediments to creating and maintaining sustainable community? How should we respond to the challenges, opportunities and theological/ethical mandates for working to build sustainable community?

The most direct lineage for the WCC Climate Change work comes from the work of the former WCC Church in Society which convened a pivotal consultation in Budapest in 1974 to launch a study on science and technology which culminated in a major conference at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1979. One of the organizing foci for the Budapest 1974 event was to reflect on the Club of Rome’s report Limits to Growth. A key contribution of that event and reinforced by a powerful speech of Dr. Charles Birch at the subsequent WCC 1975 Assembly in Nairobi was the articulation of the concept of “sustainable society”, the idea that the world’s future requires a vision of development that can be sustained for the long-term, both economically and environmentally. Birch’s emphasis on the life style of the industrialised countries laid the ground for the approach of the climate change work in subsequent years. Without his insistence the term ‘sustainable’ would not have become of the WCC vision of the future. During the 1970s, the WCC focused this work through a program on the just, participatory and sustainable society (JPSS).

In 1983, the WCC Assembly in Vancouver adopted a process focused on “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) through which churches were encouraged to work together on these inter-related themes. Many churches became increasingly attentive to environmental concerns during this period adopting policy statements and initiating education and advocacy activities on specific issues. The JPIC process culminated in a World Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation in Seoul, Korea, in 1990 at which a series of ten theological affirmations and specific covenants for action were approved which provide a description of the inter-relatedness of economic inequity, militarism, ecological destruction, climate change and racial injustice and the theological, ethical and spiritual basis for affirming and sustaining life in its fullness

There have also been a number of occasions of interaction between Christian theologians and leaders of other living faiths focused on rediscovering the important contributions from within the traditions and sacred writings of each of the faith systems which could help move human societies toward greater respect for the natural world and the creation of sustainable community. One of these events was an inter-faith consultation hosted by the WCC in August 1991 to develop proposals for inclusion in an “Earth Charter”.

The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro provided an opportunity for witnessing to the spiritual dimensions of the ecological crisis. Many faiths were represented at the Rio Earth Summit and held joint vigils, ceremonies and workshops. The World Council of Churches sponsored a major ecumenical gathering bringing to Rio 150 representatives of churches from over 100 countries for two weeks of prayer, worship, study and involvement in the Earth Summit

During the 1990s, the WCC work on environment-related issues focused on global climate change, monitoring the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, and beginning a significant engagement in ethical issues raised by the growth in the biotechnology industry. This work gained a higher profile in a major engagement of the WCC in the

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in Johannesburg, September 2002.

WCC delegations of varying sizes have been present at all UN negotiating sessions which culminated in the adoption at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Once the UNFCCC was ratified by a sufficient number of countries, the major annual implementation negotiating sessions began at the Conferences of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COPs). A delegation of the WCC was present at all COPs and at many of them, the WCC accepted the invitation of the UNFCCC Secretariat to make a statement during the High-Level Ministerial Segment. Among the different activities organized during COPs, the following can be highlighted:

At COP1, in 1995, in Berlin, a large WCC delegation set the pattern for advocacy with delegates during the negotiations and for ecumenical and inter-faith gatherings with members of the local faith communities on the weekend in the middle of the negotiations;

At COP3, in 1997, in Kyoto, several large inter-religious events were held including a service in the Catholic Cathedral involving Buddhists, Shintos, Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus;

At COP4, in 1998, in Buenos Aires, a large ecumenical service was held at the Basílica “Nuestra Señora del Pilar”, the oldest church in Buenos Aires with a presentation by Ambassador Raúl Estrada Oyuela, chair of the UNFCCC;

At COP5, in 1999, in Bonn, an ecumenical service and reception had the address of Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme;

At COP7, in 2001, in Marrakech, a timely WCC sponsored Christian-Islamic Dialogue on Environment, highly appreciated by UN officials, coming two months after the terrorist attacks of September 11th in New York and Washington;

At COP9, in 2003, in Milan, an inter-religious declaration on climate change was added to the WCC statement;

At COP 12, in 2006 in Nairobi, the critical situation in Africa was highlighted at the statement and parallel events;

At COP 13, in 2007, in Bali, a side event sponsored by the WCC addressed the Greenhouse Development Rights framework and the ecumenical service counted with an inter-religious representation and a recorded message of the Archbishop of Canterbury

Ecumenical initiatives on climate change

Within the historical context of ecumenical reflection on the inter-relationship of ecological sustainability and social justice, a focus on the specific issue of “global warming” began in some WCC member churches in the late 1980s. Scientific evidence had begun to point to a change in the atmospheric composition with potential serious climatic impacts. For instance, the Toronto Conference on the Changing Atmosphere in 1988 and the Second World Climate Conference in 1990, were high-profile events which contributed to growing public awareness. The church and ecumenical activity that began at this time was in response to an analysis that climate change was not only an issue of scientific interest but that it had major ethical dimensions.

The first global ecumenical participation in an event on climate change was in Washington, D.C. in October 1988 at a consultation sponsored by the then-existing Greenhouse Crisis Foundation established by Jeremy Rifkin. The foundation had invited the WCC to co-sponsor the gathering which agreed. The event brought together a number

of church participants, development workers, environmentalists, scientists and politicians to learn more about what we then called “global warming” as it was being documented by the World Meteorological Organisation

In May 1989, an inter-regional ecumenical network began when Canadian churches and representatives of churches in Europe, especially from Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, which were gathered for the Basel Ecumenical Assembly, agreed to collaborate on climate change work. This collaboration emanated in a major consultation on the responsibility of churches in northern societies held in Gwatt, Switzerland, in 1991, co-sponsored by the Swiss Protestant Federation and the Canadian Council of Churches.

The WCC began to include climate change more formally on its agenda after the Gwatt consultation specifically providing a profile to the issue of climate change as a priority focus at the World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation in Seoul Korea in March 1990.

The WCC work on climate change

The WCC work on climate change combines a strong advocacy component, especially focusing at the UNFCCC and a liaison component, linking experiences of the churches, especially those more affected by climate change effects, with the broad ecumenical movement.

The work is done by staff together with a group of consultants, coming from churches and specialized ministries, with the support of the WCC Working Group on Climate Change. This Working Group was formed already at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, with participation of representatives from each region. This Working Group with some variation in membership has been the facilitator of the WCC’s climate change work ever since.

The work on climate change has always been concerned in articulating theological and ethical analysis with advocacy strategies and educational resources for the churches.

Among the different consultations held it is worth mentioning those held in Driebergen, The Netherlands, which resulted in WCC resources like the “Accelerated Climate Change: Sign of Peril, Test of Faith, 1993” and the WCC “Statement on Global Warming and Climate Change: a Call to the Churches, 1994 adopted by the WCC Central Committee”.

A consultation held in Saskatoon, Canada, in 2000, reflected on ethical dimensions of emission and produced the report “The Earth’s Atmosphere – Responsible Caring and Equitable Sharing for a Global Commons”.

An event in Geneva in November 2001 drew together representatives of churches and church-related relief and development agencies and highlighted the climate change adaptation needs of developing countries through its Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change, which led to the ecumenical advocacy statement “A Call to Action in Solidarity with those Most Affected by Climate Change”.

In the Pacific, a gathering of churches from WCC member churches in the region supplemented by international participants from other regions took place on the island

atoll of Kiribati in March 2004 and produced the Otin Taai Declaration – A Statement and Recommendations from the WCC and WCC Member Churches in the Pacific.

A WCC climate change consultation, co-sponsored by church-related relief and development agencies, was held in September 2004 at Woudschoten, The Netherlands. The consultation adopted the document “Moving Beyond Kyoto with Equity, Justice and Solidarity”.

In 2007, a consultation on climate change and development took place in London co-organized with Christian Aid, stressing the links between development initiatives and climate change constraints.

The policy of the WCC regarding Climate Change addressed the Tenth Anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol through a statement in September 2007 and updated the position regarding Global Warming in February 2008.

In May 2008, in Geneva, the meeting of the Working Group on Climate Change focused on Climate change in the Pacific, with testimonies from the Pacific Conference of Churches and on a common ecumenical strategy towards COPs in Poznan and Copenhagen.

Networking has become a crucial dimension of the WCC Climate change work, articulating the work of churches and other ecumenical actors being done in different regions on a shared agenda. The WCC Climate Change network is made up of people who are rooted in the work of WCC member churches, national councils or regional ecumenical organisations, specialized ministries and others who have expressed their interest in the ethical perspective which the WCC brings to its climate change engagement.

The coordinated efforts at global, regional, national and local levels has, through the years, led to strengthening the climate change advocacy work in which the WCC has engaged. The threat of climate change is much worse today as verified by scientists than when the WCC began its work on the issue in 1988. One cannot help but be sobered further by the minimal progress that has been made by industrialised nations in actual limiting greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, many industrialised countries have significantly increased their emissions since the base line of 1990 except for countries with economies in transition whose reduction in net emissions is more a function of their collapsed industrial economies than as a result of actions to increase energy efficiency. Countries in the European Union are making much better progress than those in North America but most industrialised countries still face significant challenges in reaching their Kyoto Protocol targets. Furthermore, the United States of America where the churches have had a very active climate change advocacy programme for years has withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol process. Churches' voices are an important component of the civil society pressure for action on climate change including ratifying and implementing the Kyoto Protocol. For instance, civil society groups in Russia, including leadership from a Russian participant of the WCC work on climate change, were active for years in building public and political support for ratification of the Kyoto Protocol in that country. Within the UN context, the diligence, ethical clarity and history of the WCC's presence at all the intergovernmental negotiating sessions since 1990 is viewed with appreciation which is given tangible expression in access for voicing the WCC's perspectives within the negotiations.

The WCC's advocacy initiatives have been systematically integrated with those of regional and national ecumenical bodies. There has been an important synergy between the WCC and member churches on sharing information, resources and collaborative advocacy

Climate change in context

The WCC Climate Change work has tried to contribute constructively to the WCC's work on economic globalisation in the period since the Harare Assembly. As previously shown, the advocacy work on climate change has been centred on the inter-governmental negotiations related to the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. At the sessions of the Conference of Parties (COPs) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the WCC has regularly had the opportunity to make plenary statements in which it has decried the lack of rapid action on the part of the wealthier industrialised nations to limit the impact of climate change on the more vulnerable and economically weaker peoples of the world. The WCC's approach to climate change and globalisation has not only encompassed the critiquing of ideologies, international and governmental policies and corporate power, but has also posited alternative approaches to building sustainable communities presenting some of its approaches at different editions of the World Social Forum.

Though many ecological issues underline the interconnectedness of elements of Creation and the impact of human societies on the well-being of ecosystems, there are few that illustrate this inter-relatedness and the destructive power of contemporary human societies as intensely as does the issue of climate change.

The WCC Climate Change work has benefited greatly from the gifts of communities of thought and practice from around the world in grounding our own work in a broader agenda of justice, of a transformative justice within the whole Earth community. Especially inspiring have been the connections with excluded and vulnerable communities whose relationship to the Earth is more intense.

From the WCC perspective, it has become clear that the imperative of the Gospel to look after the poorest and most vulnerable has a clear expression in the victims of climate change effects. This was especially highlighted at the WCC consultation on "Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change", which took place in November 2001. Advocacy and solidarity actions coordinated by the WCC have focused on enhancing victims' rights and responding to their urgent calls, frequently voiced by churches in the most affected regions.

One of the most profound lessons that we have learned over the course of the WCC Climate Change work is the indispensability of spiritual values and mutual nurture which help sustain our energy for the long-term, empower us to confront the forces of destruction within society and ourselves, and enliven us to articulate and model a more holistic and life-enriching way of being. Prayer, worship, theological reflection and community all play an important role as do our collective efforts to live lives characterised by gratitude, humility, love, justice, sufficiency, solidarity, peace, faith and hope.

As soon as the WCC Climate Change work began to look in depth at adaptation issues for vulnerable peoples and ecosystems, it became clear water issues in relationship with climate change would need to be one of the significant themes. Climate change has many

ramifications. It raises issues of energy, mobility, soil, natural reserves – and of course also water. Any real response to climate change must take into account the whole range of ecological threats, but we could cover only a few aspects of the whole range of issues at stake. In recent times water has emerged in many churches as a pressing priority – partly as a consequence of climate change but in many respects independently from it.

The ecumenical cooperation on these inter-related ecological issues of climate change and water led to the formation of the Ecumenical Water Network³, whose Secretariat is located at the WCC and which is working in close collaboration with the WCC Climate Change Project. The EWN coordinates churches' initiatives in relationship to water at the local and national level and addresses some advocacy dimensions of water issues that are not climate-related. A strong component of the advocacy work has been the struggle for the recognition and implementation of the human right to water.

WCC resources

Selection of policy positions, study papers and publications and declarations of the WCC: (the more recent ones are available online under documents and publications at: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/programmes/justice-diakonia-and-responsibility-for-creation/climate-change-and-water.html>)

- North/South and Global Warming -Toward an effective and equitable basis for negotiating climate change conventions and protocols, 1989 •
- Accelerated Climate Change: Sign of Peril, Test of Faith, 1993 •
- WCC Statement on Global Warming and Climate Change: a Call to the Churches, 1994
- Climate Change and the Churches, Ecumenical Review, Geneva, 1995
- Climate Change and the Quest for Sustainable Societies, 1998
- Mobility – Prospects of Sustainable Mobility, 1998
- The Earth's Atmosphere – Responsible Caring and Equitable Sharing for a Global Commons, 2000
- Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change, 2002
- A Call to Action in Solidarity with those Most Affected by Climate Change, 2002
- Otin Taai Declaration – A Statement and Recommendations from the WCC and WCC Member Churches in the Pacific, 2004
- Moving Beyond Kyoto with Equity, Justice and Solidarity, 2004
 - Climate change, Brochure for the Porto Alegre Assembly of the WCC, 2006
- Statement on Water for live, 2006
- Statement on the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto protocol, 2007
- “Be stewards of God's creation”. Minute on global warming and climate change, 2008

³ See the EWN website : <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html>



**World Council of Churches
Executive Committee meeting
Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 28 September 2007**

Statement on the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol

*[Christ] is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn of all creation;
for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created. (Colossians 1:15)*

1. The World Council of Churches took up the problem of climate change in 1992, informed by a mature ecumenical commitment to environmental responsibility. Climate change, with its life-threatening consequences, challenges churches to witness to the integrity of God's creation. It raises economic, political and ethical issues, and demonstrates the brokenness of relationships between God, humankind and creation. Human activity that contributes to climate change is an offence against God who cares for life.
2. The Bible teaches the wholeness of creation: Life is created, sustained and made whole by the power of God's Holy Spirit (Genesis 1; Romans 8). God creates human beings out of the dust of the earth (Genesis 2). Sin breaks relationships among humankind and with the created order (Genesis 3 and 4; Jeremiah 14, Hosea 4:1-3). Bearing the marks of human sin, "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Romans 8:19). God provided all creatures with the conditions to live life as it is meant to be, in a specific relation towards one another. When creation is threatened by climate change we are called to speak out and act as an expression of our commitment to life, justice and love.
3. Many regions of the world are experiencing drastic changes in rainfall patterns that result in severe droughts and unprecedented floods. Sea levels are rising. Hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons are increasing in strength and frequency, causing loss of life and destruction of the environment and of property. Antarctica, the Arctic, Greenland and mountainous regions are undergoing extraordinary rates of melting due to temperature increases. Those who suffer the most from these events are impoverished and vulnerable communities.
4. Individually and together in the WCC, more and more churches, ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries have taken action concerning climate change. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul issued a call to observe September 1 (the beginning of the liturgical year in the Orthodox Church) as creation day and His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, a leader in the field, has organized a series of symposiums such as the recent event in Greenland. The Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Romania this month recommended dedicating a special season of the year to creation, beginning with September 1. From the Pacific Islands to Russia, from Norway to South Africa, churches in all regions have called upon their governments to join the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Many including the WCC are working with groups in civil society and with other faith

communities. At the Kyoto conference itself, in 1997, an inter-religious gathering was held in the Catholic Cathedral of Kyoto with participation of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims and representatives of other religions.

5. Now, ten years after the Kyoto Protocol, there is general agreement that the climate is changing and human activity is a major cause. The UN-sponsored Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), for instance, has determined that increasing emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse" gases will cause a rise in global mean temperatures of 1.4° to 5.8 °C (compared to pre-industrial levels) by the end of this century.

6. The Kyoto Protocol sets out targets and a schedule for industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It is an important first step towards a just and sustainable global climate policy regime. However, in the last ten years, it has become clear that carbon emissions are still far above sustainable levels and still increasing. Much more radical reductions are urgently needed.

7. The Kyoto Protocol came into force only in 2005. 174 countries have now ratified it. However, two major emitters, the USA and Australia, have withdrawn from the Kyoto process. There is also a trend to convert the protocol into a market-based instrument for minimizing economic damage to national economies and business opportunities instead of stressing its purpose of limiting greenhouse gas emissions.

8. After 2012, when the first commitments of the protocol end, a more principle-based approach is essential for achieving an effective and equitable global policy on climate control. Principles that should be taken into account include the principle of equal entitlements to the use of the atmosphere and equal rights to development; the principle of historic responsibility the precautionary principle (prospective responsibility); the principle of priority for the poorest and weakest; and the principle of maximum risk reduction. Some frameworks that lay the groundwork for this principle-based regime already exist, like the Contraction and Convergence and the Greenhouse Development Rights approaches. These invite further deliberations and negotiations.


9. When the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the Third Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, meet in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, the need for a broader and more radical timetable of action against climate change will be high on the agenda. The Bali conference must make concrete progress in this regard.

10. The need now is for more comprehensive policies to support and promote adaptation and mitigation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change, particularly in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions. Governments in the industrialized countries should significantly increase support for such programmes. Their focus on unqualified economic growth must be transformed, along with their neglect of its destructive effects on people and the environment. They also bear the historic responsibility for high emissions. The WCC dedicates its work to supporting such a transformation.

The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Etchmiadzin, Armenia, 25-28 September 2007:

A. *Reiterates* the concerns of the churches over climate change and its adverse effects on poor and vulnerable communities in many parts of the world;

B. *Encourages* member churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical partners to strengthen their commitment and to foster their co-operation with regard to climate change; this requires deeper ethical and theological reflections about the human causes of climate change, exploring inter-religious avenues for cooperation and constructive intervention, and ensuring better stewardship of creation in their own actions;

- C. *Supports* the recommendations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Third European Ecumenical Assembly that churches dedicate a special time each year to creation, its care and stewardship;
- D. *Affirms* the basic thrust of the UNFCCC to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human-induced climate change;
- E. *Commemorates* the tenth anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol and celebrates the protocol as an important step forward towards a just and sustainable global climate policy regime;
- F. *Calls* all those countries that have ratified the Kyoto Protocol to fully implement its provisions and those who have not, for example, USA and Australia, to meet targets at least as strict as those included in the protocol;
- G. *Welcomes* the strengthening of the Ecumenical Water Network and its focus on water issues that are directly and indirectly associated with climate change;
- H. *Requests* the ecumenical delegation to the Thirteenth Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC and the Third Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol in Bali in December 2007 to promote an agreement that achieves climate stabilization at 2°C above pre-industrial levels, or less, and to include concerns noted above in its statement.
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“Be stewards of God’s creation!”

Minute on global warming and climate change

Adopted by the WCC Central Committee, Geneva, February 2008

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”

(Genesis 1:1, 31, NIV)

The present minute builds on previous statements of the WCC, especially the statement on the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol, adopted by the WCC executive committee in September 2007.

1. The scriptures affirm that the “earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 26:1, NIV). In Genesis 1:28, God charges humanity to care for the earth by giving humanity “dominion” over it. The word “dominion” is most appropriately translated as “stewardship”, since humanity is not the master of the earth but steward to responsibly care for the integrity of creation. God wondrously and lovingly created a world with more than enough resources to sustain generations upon generations of human beings and other living creatures. But humanity is not always faithful in its stewardship. Mindless production and excessive consumption by individuals, corporations and countries have led to continuous desecration of creation, including global warming and other forms of climate change.
2. Indigenous peoples all over the world continue to live a respectful way of relating with the environment. The sacred nature of the whole creation is also reflected in different indigenous world-views. While looking at the impact of global warming and climate change, the indigenous peoples’ witness provides inspiration and encouragement.
3. Climate change, as the variation in the earth’s global climate or in regional climates over time, and its effects are being experienced already in many regions of the world. Global warming, i.e. the increase in the average temperature of the earth’s near-surface air and oceans, is one of the most evident aspects of climate change. The average temperature of the earth is rising. This creates the melting of ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, glaciers, permafrost in mountainous regions and the rising of the average sea level. Rising sea levels are already affecting some countries like Bangladesh in Asia and some islands, particularly in the Pacific. A water crisis brought on by severe droughts and unprecedented floods has resulted in a lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Other effects of climate change are hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons, which are increasing in strength, causing loss of life and destruction of the environment and property. Further consequences of climate change are described in the 2007 “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report”. Thus, human life and the whole of creation are suffering a new threat. Climate change raises ecological, social, economic, political and ethical issues, and demonstrates the brokenness of relationships between God, humankind and creation.
4. As stated by the “IPCC Report” and other studies, the situation needs urgent mitigation and adaptation measures in order to prevent further adverse consequences of rising temperatures. Mitigation (dealing with the causes) is a must for developed countries that will have to drastically reduce their carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Adaptation (dealing with the impacts) is urgently needed by developing countries to be able to cope with the changes that are happening. Those who are and will increasingly be affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the global South who are much more dependant on natural resources for their subsistence and do not have the means to adapt to the changes. Deforestation in Africa, Asia and Latin America; the increase in vector-borne diseases (like dengue or malaria) in the higher altitude areas of Africa as a result of the increase in temperature; the forced migration, displacement and resettlement of populations as a result of sea level rise, particularly in the Pacific; are some of the impacts that will continue to increase the pressure on poor and vulnerable communities.
5. To address the threats the world is facing because of climate change, action must be taken now. In December 2007, at the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali, governments agreed on a road map for the negotiation of a new set of commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol for the post-2012 period. Negotiations are to be concluded by

the end of 2009. The United States is now the sole major emitter who has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. If there is no profound change in life styles, development patterns and the pursuit of economic growth, humanity will not be able to meet the challenge. As the WCC delegation in Bali clearly stressed, "it is our conviction as members of faith communities that a 'change of paradigm' from one way of thinking to another is needed if we are to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change".

6. Climate change is both an environmental issue and a matter of justice. Major green house gas (GHG) emitters have a historic responsibility to assume, to stop and to reverse the current trend. Developing countries, while looking for better conditions for their people, face a dilemma which should be confronted in looking for ways not to repeat the path that led to the present situation. The current unsustainable production and consumption patterns have caused tremendous negative effects in the environment and generated what has been called an ecological debt towards humanity and the earth. This ecological debt can be analyzed in relation to the financial debt. To reverse this trend it becomes crucial to look for technologies and practices both to mitigate and adapt, especially responding to the needs of vulnerable communities.
7. Churches and religious communities can take key leadership roles in addressing global warming and climate change concerns to individuals, communities and governments. The question we must pose is whether we can rise together to meet this unprecedented opportunity. Churches and religious communities, for example, must find ways to challenge and motivate each other to measure our ecological and economic "footprints" and to follow through by making lasting changes in lifestyles and economic pursuits. Church members have to take responsibility for paying their share of the ecological debt that looms large in the years ahead. Christians should practice "life in all its fullness" (John 10:10) in the face of a modern materialism that has now been globalized. Steps such as these will be a testimony which could permeate societies and be a catalyst for much-needed change.
8. As the effects of global warming can lead to conflict between populations competing over resulted scarce resources, WCC member churches' actions with regards to climate change should also be seen in relationship with the Decade to Overcome Violence and the lead-up to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, scheduled to take place in 2011. The theme of the convocation, "Glory to God and Peace on Earth", highlights peace on earth, which should include peace with the earth as well as peace among human beings.
9. Many churches, ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries have already started to take action concerning climate change and global warming. The Ecumenical Patriarch has played a leadership role advocating for the care of creation, involving the scientific community, including its concerns in education curricula and calling, on 1 September 1989, to observe September 1st (the beginning of the liturgical year in the Orthodox Church) as creation day. This call was reiterated by the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, meeting in Romania in September 2007. Also in September 2007, the 9th assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches called on the churches in the Pacific to advocate for "a regional immigration policy giving citizens of countries most affected by climate change (...) rights to resettlement in other Pacific island nations", and on the global ecumenical family to support this initiative. Forty years after the WCC Uppsala assembly, the Church of Sweden is organizing in Uppsala an inter-religious summit on climate change in November 2008.

The central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 13-20 February 2008:

- A. **Urgently calls** the churches to strengthen their moral stand in relationship to global warming and climate change, recalling its adverse effects on poor and vulnerable communities in various parts of the world, and encourages the churches to reinforce their advocacy towards governments, NGOs, the scientific community and the business sector to intensify cooperation in response to global warming and climate change;
- B. **Calls for** a profound change in the relationship towards nature, economic policies, consumption, production and technological patterns. This change is based on the commitment of Christian communities and institutions, including the WCC, which should strengthen the work of the Ecumenical Centre Ecology Group to continue implementing ecological practices in the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva;

- C. **Encourages** member churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical partners to:
- a. share and further develop creative ways of practicing ecologically respectful relationships within the human community and with the earth;
 - b. share knowledge and affordable technology that promote environmentally friendly lifestyles;
 - c. monitor the ecological footprints of individuals, parishes, corporations and states and take other steps to mitigate climate change and global warming;
- D. **Urges** member churches to observe through prayers and action a special time for creation, its care and stewardship, starting on September 1st every year, to advocate for the plight of people and communities of the Pacific, especially in the low lying atolls of Kiribati and Tuvalu, and to find specific ways to show our ecumenical solidarity with those most at risk;
- E. **Requests** theological schools, seminaries and academies to teach stewardship of all creation in order to deepen the ethical and theological understanding of the causes of global warming and climate change and of the sustainable lifestyle that is needed as a response;
- F. **Promotes** the exploration of inter-religious and inter-cultural avenues for cooperation and constructive response, such as the inter-religious summit planned by the Church of Sweden, ensuring a better stewardship of creation and a common witness through concrete actions.



Statement from the World Council of Churches (WCC)
to the High-Level Ministerial Segment of the
13th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP13) to the
United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
3rd Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol –
(CMP3)

Bali, Indonesia, December 14, 2007

“THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER: ACT FAST AND ACT NOW!”

Mr. President and fellow participants in this UN Climate Conference:

A Change of Paradigm is needed

It is our conviction as members of faith communities that a Change of Paradigm from one way of thinking to another is needed if we are to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change. It constitutes a transformation, a “metamorphosis”. This kind of movement just does not happen on its own; it must be catalyzed by agents of change. The world Faiths could be one of those catalysts.

A change in paradigm appears as mandatory in the prevailing economic strategy of promoting endless growth and production of goods and a seemingly insatiable level of consumption among the high-consuming sectors of our societies. Such economic and consumption patterns are leading to the depletion of critical natural resources and to extremely dangerous implications with climate change and development.

Societies must shift to a new paradigm where the operative principles are ethics, justice, equity, solidarity, human development and environmental conservation.

In our traditions, we believe that the earth was entrusted to us but we simply cannot do whatever we want with it. We cannot make use of nature using it only as a commodity. We must bear in mind that our liberty does not allow us to destroy that which sustains life on our planet.

We Must Act Here and Now

Much has been said and written about addressing climate change. However, a tangible result is not yet on the horizon. The First Commitment Period within the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012. Time is running out to reach equitable and sustainable targets for post-2012.

Are we ready as human beings, as members of the global society, as members of our faith communities and our organisations, as sovereign nations, to meet what is expected from us? Or are we going to implement new delays, new strategies to avoid our ethical and moral duties? In doing so it would be no less than suicidal, jeopardizing the diversity of life in the earth we inhabit, enjoy and share.

It is time to adopt legal mechanisms that adequately respond to the gravity of the situation as documented by the IPCC and which have enforcement provisions with sufficient strength to compel full compliance.

The Statement adopted by the World Council of Churches Executive Committee on occasion of the “10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol”, among other issues, clearly reminds us of our responsibilities and points us toward the future:

- The Kyoto Protocol sets out targets and a schedule for industrialized countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It is an important first step towards a just and sustainable global climate policy regime. However, in the last ten years, it has become clear that carbon emissions are still far above sustainable levels and still increasing. Much more radical reductions are urgently needed.
- The Kyoto Protocol came into force only in 2005. 175 countries have now ratified it... There is also a trend to convert the protocol into a market-based instrument for minimizing economic damage to national economies and business opportunities instead of stressing its purpose of limiting greenhouse gas emissions.
- After 2012, when the first commitments of the protocol end, a more principle-based approach is essential for achieving an effective and equitable global policy on climate control. Principles that should be taken into account include the principle of equal entitlements to the use of the atmosphere and equal rights to development; the principle of historic responsibility the precautionary principle (prospective responsibility); the principle of priority for the poorest and weakest; and the principle of maximum risk reduction.
- ...the need for a broader and more radical timetable of action against climate change will be high on the agenda. The Bali conference must make concrete progress in this regard.
- The need now is for more comprehensive policies to support and promote adaptation and mitigation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change, particularly in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific regions.

We have arrived to the point where we know what is causing climate change. We have expressed all our concerns, cleared our doubts and affirmed what took us to the inequitable situation where the poorer carry the burden of the irresponsible waste of resources, energy and extreme consumerism of the richer. It is time now to start taking the positive actions that will lead us to find practical solutions to the problems of the great majority of today’s world population.

The eyes of the world are on us. Hundreds of millions of people, women and men, young and aged, have placed their hopes on us. We have to realize that we are kept in their prayers, every one of them following their own religious tradition. And this we cannot forget. Our mission is not to deceive or disappoint them.

Our willing participation in these great changes is required today, now, and not tomorrow. There is no time left for endless words. There must be no more delays. Once more we cry out:

“THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER: ACT FAST AND ACT NOW!”



**Message of His All Holiness,
the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew,
on the Day of the Protection of the
Environment - 01/09/2008**

Encyclical, September 1, 2008

Prot. No. 1091

+ B A R T H O L O M E W
BY THE MERCY OF GOD ARCHBISHOP OF CONSTANTINOPLE, NEW ROME AND
ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH
TO THE PLENITUDE OF THE CHURCH
GRACE AND PEACE
FROM THE CREATOR OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE
OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST

For creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it ... For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. (Rom. 8. 20,22)

Beloved Brothers and children in the Lord,

Once again, as the ecclesiastical year begins, we are called to reflect – with renewed spiritual intensity in Christ and especial sensitivity – on the state of our bountiful planet, and to offer particular prayers for the protection of the whole natural world.

Many things have changed since our predecessor, the late Patriarch Dimitrios decided, over two decades ago, that September 1st should be dedicated as a day of supplication for the preservation of God's beautiful creation. In assuming that initiative, the late Ecumenical Patriarch also issued a message of warning about the destructive consequences of abusing the environment. He noted that, in contrast with most other forms of human misuse and violation, environmental pollution has the potential to cause vast and irreversible damage, by destroying virtually all forms of life on the planet.

At the time, of course, this warning may have sounded exaggerated to certain sceptical ears; however, in the light of what we know now, it is abundantly clear that his words were prophetic. Today, environmental scientists expressly emphasize that the observed

climate change has the potential to disrupt and destroy the entire ecosystem, which sustains not only the human species but also the entire wondrous world of animals and plants that is interdependent upon one another like a chain. The choices and actions of what is otherwise civilized modern man have led to this tragic situation, essentially comprising a moral and spiritual problem, which the divinely inspired Apostle Paul had articulated with colourful imagery in underlining its specifically ontological dimension in his Letter to the Romans nineteen centuries ago: "For creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it ... For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now." (Rom. 8. 20,22)

At this point, however, we are obligated to state that this spiritual and moral dimension of the environmental problem constitutes today, perhaps more so than ever before, the common conscience of all people, and especially young people, who are well aware of the fact that all of humanity has a common destiny. An increasing number of people comprehends that their overall consumption – namely, their personal involvement in the production of particular goods or their rejection of others – touches not only on ethical, but also on eschatological parameters. An increasing number of people understands that the irrational use of natural resources and the unchecked consumption of energy contribute to the reality of climate change, with consequences on the life and survival of humanity created in the image of God and is therefore tantamount to sin. An increasing number of people characterizes either virtuous or else vicious those who correspondingly treat created nature either reasonably or unreasonably.

Nevertheless, by the same token, even as people's awareness of the environmental crisis grows, unfortunately the image presented by our planet today is the opposite. Especially disturbing is the fact that the poorest and most vulnerable members of the human race are being affected by environmental problems which they did not create. From Australia to the Cape Horn of Africa, we learn of regions experiencing prolonged drought, which result in the desertification of formerly fertile and productive areas, where the local populations suffer from extreme hunger and thirst. From Latin America to the heart of Eurasia, we hear of melting glaciers, on which millions of people depend for water supply.

Our Holy and Great Church of Christ, following in the footsteps and example of the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios, is working tirelessly to raise awareness not only among public opinion but also among responsible world leaders. It achieves this by organizing Ecological Symposia that deal with climate change and the management of water. The ultimate purpose of this endeavor is to explore the interconnectedness of the world's ecosystems and to study the way in which the phenomena of global warming and its anthropogenic effects are manifested. Through these academic gatherings, attended by representatives of various Christian Churches and world religions as well as diverse

scholarly disciplines, our Ecumenical Patriarchate is striving to establish a stable and innovative alliance between religion and science, based on the fundamental principle that – in order for the goal to be achieved and for the natural environment to be preserved – both sides must show a spirit of good will, mutual respect, and cooperation. The collaboration of science and religion at these Symposia organized in different regions of the planet, seeks to contribute to the development of an environmental ethic, which must underline that the use of the world and the enjoyment of material goods must be Eucharistic, accompanied by doxology toward God; by the same token, the abuse of the world and participation therein without reference to God is sinful both before the Creator and before humanity as creation.

Beloved Brothers and children in the Lord,

we know that the creation participated in the fall of Adam from the original beauty; as a result, it groans and travails in pain together. Moreover, we know that the abuse, deviation, violation and arrogance of humanity contribute to the destruction of the travailing nature, which is subjected to the corruption of creation. Finally, we also know that this destruction actually comprises self-destruction. Therefore, we invite all of you, irrespective of position and profession, to remain faithful to a natural use of all God's creation, "offering thanks to the God, who created the world and granted everything to us."

For to Him is due all glory and power to the ages. Amen.

Your beloved brother in Christ and fervent supplicant before God,
+BARTHOLOMEW
Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Statement from the 9th Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches on Climate Change

We, the members of the Pacific Conference of Churches, meeting at Kanana Fou Theological College in American Samoa from the 3rd -9th of September 2007, are acutely aware of the effects of climate change on our Moana, our Oceania.

We deplore the actions of industrialised countries that pollute and desecrate our Oceania, our Moana. Our Moana, our oceania is our gift from God and as a part of God's creation, it is our duty as dwellers of this ocean to be stewards of this gift. It is our theology and our covenant with God and with one another. We invite the worldwide community to work with us. We are a part of the whole body of Christ. When our low-lying atolls of Oceania are affected by the effects of climate change, we all suffer as a result.

We stand at the *Turanga Wae Wae* (place of ownership /guardians of the gift) of the Pacific Ocean and as guardians of this Ocean, it is our duty to protect and safeguard this gift for our future generation.

We, the members of the Pacific Conference of Churches believed called by God to:

- Affirm our commitment to care for the Oceania as our response to God's love for creation.
- Declare the urgency of the threat of human induced effects of climate change to the lives, livelihoods, societies, cultures and eco- systems of the Pacific Islands.
- Dedicate ourselves to engaging our churches in education and action on climate change.
- Commit ourselves to ecumenical collaboration among our churches and with other religious and secular bodies in the Pacific and beyond that will increase the effectiveness of our national and regional efforts.

We call on our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world to act in solidarity with us to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change. We issue this call particularly to churches in the highly industrialized nations whose societies are historically responsible for the majority of polluting emissions. We further urge these countries to take responsibility for the ecological damage that they have caused by paying for the costs of adaptation to the anticipated impacts.

We call on our global ecumenical movement to pressure all countries to ratify and implement the Kyoto Protocol especially highly industrialized nations such as the United States of America and Australia which to date have not ratified the Protocol.

As Pacific Churches we encourage companies that are major producers or consumers of fossil fuels to support a transition toward less carbon- intensive economies, reduced energy usage and the development of cleaner, renewable energy sources.

We invite church-related specialized ministries for emergency response, development and advocacy to integrate climate change and adaptation projects into their policy- development, education and advocacy.

As a people we express appreciation to the World Council of Churches for its support of the Pacific churches on the issue of climate change. We call for the inclusion of the climate change programme as a high priority of the programme of the WCC. We will take responsibility to keep the churches informed on current developments.

We, member churches and national councils of churches of the Pacific Conference of Churches, commit the appropriate resources towards the following specific actions on climate change:

1. In solidarity with the people of Kiribati, Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands we call upon the churches of the Pacific to be welcoming and compassionate churches to our brothers and sisters from the above countries who wish to resettle in our respective Pacific countries.
2. Advocacy for a regional immigration policy giving citizens of countries most affected by climate change, especially sea-level rise, rights to resettlement in other Pacific Island nations or Pacific regional countries of their choice.
3. Advocacy for a mitigation policy binding the Pacific Forum Island countries to reduce emission rates of carbon dioxide by 30% of 1990 levels by 2020 and by 60% - 90% by 2050, (consistent with the need identified by the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, to keep temperatures below 2 degrees centigrade) by investing in renewable forms of energy and energy conservation and efficiency.
4. Advocacy for an adaptive policy binding the Pacific Forum Island countries to develop and implement appropriate strategies to adapt to climate change where possible without deterioration in quality of life, social cohesion and Pacific island cultures.
5. Advocacy for an inter-regional sea level rise financial assistance scheme to finance, the cost of mitigation, adaptation and resettlement.
6. Undertake an initiative to look at the roles and responsibilities of the sending and receiving churches to help prepare intending immigrants, to welcome and help resettle them into their new homelands.
7. Work to address wider issues related to unsustainable development, many of which are made worse by or contribute to the increasingly negative impacts of climate change.
8. Urge delegates to the Pacific Assembly to organize a public “Walk Against Warming” in Pacific Island Countries prior to the meeting of the *Conference of the Parties (COP), Thirteenth session and Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP/MOP), Third session, in Bali, Indonesia, Dec 3-14 2007.*
9. Facilitate the formation of a network or coalition of agencies advocating adaptive and mitigative action to prevent and address catastrophic climate change in the Pacific and providing relevant scientific information for the lay population.



ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES CONFERENCE DES EGLISES DE TOUTE L'AFRIQUE

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RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP TO REVERSE GLOBAL WARMING AND ENSURE EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

*A call from the All Africa Conference of Churches to the UN Climate Change Conference –
COP 13 and CMP 3, Bali, Indonesia, 13-19 December 2007.*

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is an ecumenical fellowship that represents more than 120 million Christians, with a membership of 169 national churches and regional Christian councils in 39 African countries. As a continental faith-based network, AACC speaks and stands for justice and the rights and survival of African communities, particularly the poor and the marginalised. The survival of African communities is threatened by the destructive consequences of climate change attributed largely to industrial pollution of the atmosphere by the industrialized countries.

The Fourth Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that climate change is happening now, and that it is man made with the consequences already being felt, particularly in the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

The current ecological crisis is primarily spiritual and ethical. As human beings we have failed to appreciate the intrinsic worth of ourselves, other humans, other species and future generations. We have failed to acknowledge the fact that the earth sustains life because of the harmonious balance of the elements and all the creatures within it. Our pursuit of happiness and high quality of life need not endanger other peoples, nations, communities, species and future generations that are also entitled to survival and happiness. Ecological sustenance can be assured only through the principle of being mindful of the welfare of others while we mind our own. Our survival is inextricably woven with that of others. In the long term, we cannot survive while others perish.

Since the United Nations Conference on Environment (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, there has been much debate and many international deliberations on the global environmental crisis. The Kyoto Protocol, one of the outcomes of these deliberations, has been signed and ratified by most nations. The current environmental crisis cannot be overcome through voluntary action, but through a legally binding commitment of all nations, particularly those responsible for the emissions which precipitated this crisis. The Kyoto Protocol was designed to ensure that all annex I (industrialised) countries would commit themselves to legally binding emissions reductions to 1990 levels. Since then, none of these countries have met this target, but have instead continued to increase their emissions, with the disastrous consequences which are now being experienced, particularly in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP).

The AACC therefore calls upon all the industrialized countries to implement all provisions of the Kyoto Protocol as an initial step, and that after its expiry in 2012, that this is followed by new and higher commitments based on historic responsibility and development equity. The AACC calls for *global responsible leadership* – both in the North and in the South, in the support for a real and actual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, while at the same time preserving the right of all people to reach a dignified level of sustainable development. Governments of the industrialized nations must keep the promise that they made in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The world is rapidly approaching the point of “dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”

The AACC calls on the industrialized countries to urgently do the following:

- Make binding commitments to support adaptation measures in the countries of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) in accordance with the targets agreed in the Kyoto Protocol, and establish frameworks and mechanisms to deliver sufficient and accessible adaptation funds and support, particularly to the most vulnerable populations. The funds and support for adaptation measures must be integrated within development processes in ACP, but must be in addition to, and *separate* from, current commitments on official development assistance (ODA).
- Promote the role of the civil society in order to adequately respond to the global efforts to reverse the adverse consequences of climate change.
- Support the efforts of the ACP countries to secure reliable and affordable energy necessary for poverty eradication in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.
- Support the innovation, contextualisation and development of technologies for industrial development in ACP, and give priority to the promotion of endogenous inventions and innovations.
- Avail more financial resources for investment in energy efficiency and support new renewable energy options in developing countries, without proscribing conventional options or inhibiting the process of industrialization in the short term.
- Ensure that bio-fuel production shall not be implemented at the expense of staple food production in developing countries.

The AACC calls upon the leaders of African countries to urgently do the following:

- Make legislative and financial commitments to support adaptation measures at community, national and regional levels, whilst tapping into indigenous knowledge and practices and building upon existing adaptation efforts.
- Promote the role of civil society in order to adequately respond to local efforts to reverse the adverse consequences of climate change – particularly at community levels.
- Develop appropriate legislative measures and support local efforts to secure reliable and affordable energy necessary for poverty eradication in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals.
- Define appropriate policy frameworks to support the innovation, contextualisation and development of technologies for industrial development in their respective countries, giving priority to the promotion of endogenous inventions and innovations.
- Mainstream investment in energy efficiency and support new renewable energy options in their respective countries without proscribing conventional options or inhibiting the process of industrialization in the short term.
- Ensure that bio-fuel production shall not be implemented at the expense of staple food production in developing countries.

The following are some of the Provisions which a new Protocol should include:

- Protocol to be effective after ratification by a *simple majority* of the Parties to the UNFCCC.
- Protocol to be mandatory on all UNFCCC Parties, irrespective of whether or not they ratify the Protocol. This is seen as important since they continue to contribute to global warming, even without having signed or ratified the Protocol.
- Annex I countries to allocate *Adaptation Funds* and *Mitigation Funds* for contribution to Greenhouse Gas Emissions and historical emissions respectively, calculated on the basis of their respective proportional contribution to Greenhouse Gas Emissions at 1990 levels. These funds to be administered through bilateral protocols separate from Official Development Assistance (ODA) allocations.
- Emphasis on *local technological initiatives* in response to the adverse consequences of human-related climate change, as confirmed by the Fourth Report of the IPCC (2007).
- Civil society organizations should be accorded a significant role in the mobilization of community initiatives to reverse global warming.

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AACC is a fellowship of 169 member Churches and Christian Councils in 39 African countries
La CETA est une communauté de 169 églises et conseils chrétiens dans 39 pays d'Afrique

PRESIDENT: The Rt. Rev. Dr. Nyansako-Ni-Nku **GENERAL SECRETARY:** Rev. Dr. H Mvume Dandala, GCOB KStJ



STATEMENT TO OUR RESPECTIVE CHURCHES

The ongoing climate change represents one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats ever facing the planet.

Projected global warming this century is likely to trigger serious consequences for mankind and other life forms, including a rise in sea levels which will endanger coastal areas and small islands, and a greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

Besides Oceania, the Northern circumpolar areas and the people living there are already suffering from the effects of the changing environment. This will cause severe social and economical side-effects, also in form of larger scale migration.

The consequences of the Northern sea route are not apparent, but the interest of the multinational companies show that the pressure on the natural resources will increase as the sea ice melts. The risk of pollution and increase in exploitation of fossil energy will deepen the environmental challenges.

We – as participants of the Council of Christian Churches in the Barents Region (CCCB) seminar focusing to the environmental, social and diaconal responsibility – want to address our deep concern over the global change.

It is a Christian maxim to love a neighbour and respect the nature as a gift of God. We challenge our own churches, as well as the unions and the alliances in which we participate, to focus in their words and especially in practical deeds to address the concern for the future generations' possibilities for a life worth living.

In expressing our concern we wish to remind also ourselves that it is our quest as Christian churches of the Barents Region to sustain hope in order to shed light of the Christ to the world.

*Heaven and the earth belong to you,
the world and everything it contains –
you established them.*

Psalm 89:11

In Oulu, Finland
October 30th, 2008

Bishop Per Øskar Kjølås
CCCB Chairman

Bishop Samuel Salmi
Oulu Lutheran Diocese

Metropolitan Panteleimon
Oulu Orthodox Diocese