

**World Council of Churches  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
Etchmiadzin, Armenia  
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**Final**

**STATEMENT ON THE 10<sup>th</sup> 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.