

**Doc 7**

Public Issues proposal to Officers, 7 December 2007

1. Proposal for a collective Member Church response: **CALLING THE GLOBAL CHURCH TO JOINT, PARTICIPATORY ACTION ON GLOBAL WARMING**

It is becoming clearer by the day that stopping global warming requires action on a scale and with an urgency that may be without historical precedent. Global warming will affect the well-being and challenge the lifestyles of billions of people simultaneously--it has already begun to do so--and will call whole economic systems into question.

The solutions to global warming are everyone's business. Thankfully, public and private initiatives to address global warming are burgeoning, part of an emerging international consensus about the level of the threat. Industry, commerce and civil society are mobilizing to respond to the increasingly specific warnings agreed by the scientific community. 120 multinational corporations, for example, just wrote an open letter asking public authorities to set definite controls on emissions so they can plan their futures.

The WCC Executive Committee statement in advance of this month's climate conference in Bali spoke mostly to governments, but also addressed the WCC membership:

Encouraging member churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical partners to commit, co-operate, reflect, explore inter-religious interventions, and act as better stewards of creation; Supporting proposals to put creation care and stewardship on the church calendar; Welcoming the Ecumenical Water Network and its focus on water issues and climate; (STATEMENT ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE KYOTO PROTOCOL, Armenia, September 2007)

What is the worldwide community of churches willing to do about climate change now and be accountable for in the years ahead? What changes in mass behaviour can be undertaken collectively by churches in different regions of the world?

There are hundreds of program ministries, some 500,000 parishes and the nearly 600 million people in the member churches of the WCC. Churches in society are well-placed to respond. For Christians, creation is God's gift of life entrusted to human care. The WCC has a vision to meet this systemic threat to life and a responsibility to lead its members in doing so.

To explore the churches' combined potential, the proposed action in February would require substantive debate and engagement by the Central Committee. They might be asked to debate parameters for participation and accountability that could support a global church response to the

challenge of global warming. Since action is what is needed, not words, specific follow-up actions would have to be undertaken after the meeting. Member churches, specialized ministries and ecumenical partners would have to take up the challenge and make themselves accountable to each other for the results.

Future Central Committee meetings and the next WCC Assembly would have to be used as milestones for reporting back, re-assessment and recommitment.

The remedial actions and behavioural changes resulting from this collective process would become the definitive 'statement' of the churches on global warming in the years ahead. To begin such a process among the membership would be the goal of committee action now.

## 2. Proposed STATEMENT ON PEACEFUL USES OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

The control and elimination of nuclear weapons has been and continues to be the lead issue in decades of WCC policy on disarmament. The peaceful uses of nuclear energy have not been addressed by the WCC in detail, but seen as legitimate under the terms spelled out in international nuclear treaties, protocols and safeguards, mainly under the mandate of the IAEA and with reference to a long-sought Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty.

Two recent trends in world affairs are raising new issues around the use of nuclear energy, however.

- The first is the increasing risk that fissile material could fall into unauthorized hands.
- The second is the increasing attention being given to nuclear energy because of global warming and the need to reduce the emission of carbon into the atmosphere.

While risks associated with peaceful uses of nuclear energy appear to be climbing, controls over nuclear fuels as well as nuclear weapons appear to be static at best or weakening in certain sectors.

The proposed statement would elaborate a position on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It would do so cognizant of the need the WCC has long advocated (to reinvigorate the regime governing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation including control of fissile materials) and give new attention to the context of global warming (where nuclear energy is offered as a carbon-free source of electricity despite its drawbacks and dangers).