

# **Climate Change and the World Council of Churches**



**Background information & recent statements  
March 2011**

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## Presentation

Climate change has become an issue of major concern for the world. Scientific data clearly shows the impact of human action on climate change. There is an urgent need to develop comprehensive policies to promote adaptation programmes in regions and countries severely affected by climate change, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and South East Asia regions. At the same time strong mitigation measures (especially through the reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) should be taken, mainly by industrialized countries, to prevent further increasing global warming,

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) policy on climate change clearly states the different dimensions of the climate change crisis (ecological, social, economic, political and spiritual) and from an ethical perspective, 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" (Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change, 2008).

The Climate Change programme of the WCC started in 1988, as a follow-up of the work done on sustainable communities since the mid 70s. The process brought together environment, economic and social concerns to the table of discussion of the ecumenical movement. The Convocation on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, held in Seoul, Korea, in 1990 framed a work which has continued up to now.

Advocacy at the United Nations has been a central part of this work. WCC delegations have lobbied towards the adoption of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and in all its Conference of Parties (COP), having submitted statements to the high level segment of the COPs and organized side-events and ecumenical and interfaith celebrations. Major activities were organized during the last COP 15 in Copenhagen. The WCC Minute (February 2010) "deeply regrets that a lack of political will from major players in COP 15 prevented achievement of a deal which would effectively respond to the climate change challenge".

WCC's and the ecumenical movement policies and actions on climate change are rooted in the Bible which teaches the wholeness of creation and the centrality of justice in the Christian message. God creates human beings and charges humanity to care for the earth (Gen 2:15), to be stewards of it. The God of the Bible, at the same time, is a God of justice who cares for the most vulnerable ones: the poor, the orphan, the widow, the stranger (Deuteronomy 10: 18 – 19). Bearing the marks of human sin, "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God" (Romans 8:19). The work for climate justice is a response from the churches to the challenge of climate change.

The following documents introduce the WCC's work on climate change and present a selection of recent policy positions adopted by the governing bodies of the WCC. Some of the latest statements delivered at the COPs as well as a list of WCC activities during COPs are also included. We kindly invite the reader to look for the WCC's work on Climate Change and related topics at the WCC website: <http://www.oikoumene.org/climatechange>

Dr. Guillermo Kerber  
World Council of Churches  
Geneva, March 2011

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

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, development and distribution of various resources, advocacy at the international and national levels and solidarity, accompaniment and prayers 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, regional ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries, building networks of engaged people and partnering in advocacy at the global level; consulting with scientific, economic, political and technical expertise on climate change within an ethical framework; utilizing the WCC website and an electronic update 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 **Bucharest 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 Bucharest 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).

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<sup>1</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> WCC Assembly. Guillermo Kerber edited the text to include recent WCC policy statements and actions on Climate Change.

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 COP 1, 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 COP 3, 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 COP 4, 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 COP 5, in 1999, in Bonn, an ecumenical service and reception had the address of Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of the UN Environmental Programme;

At COP 7, 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 COP 9, 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;

At COP 14, in 2008, in Poznan, Poland, the WCC statement was presented by the Archbishop of Uppsala, Anders Wejryd, together with the Interfaith Climate Manifesto while the side event, reflecting on ethical dimensions of climate change was co-organized with the Penn State University

At COP 15, in 2009, in Copenhagen, a large ecumenical delegation participated at the Climate March, the Ecumenical Celebration in the Lutheran Cathedral, the handover of signatures of the Countdown to Copenhagen Campaign, by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. A side event on Faith based approach to Climate Justice was co-organized by the WCC and Caritas Internationalis and co-sponsored by Church of Sweden, the National Council of Churches in Denmark, Church World Service and the Asian Muslim Action Network. A global Bellringing campaign brought together thousands of churches and communities praying and ringing bells for the care of creation.

At COP 16, in Cancun, the Time for Climate Justice Campaign brought together the ecumenical delegation. An inter-religious celebration was organized with Caritas Internationalis at the Church of the Risen Christ in Cancun, while a side event with the Asian Muslim Action Network, ACT Alliance and Caritas Internationalis addressed "Faith based organisations advocate for climate justice"<sup>2</sup>.

### **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 and co-sponsored by the WCC. 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.

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<sup>2</sup> See at the end of this dossier the compilation made by Lic. Elias C. Abramides on the WCC's activities at COPs.

## **The WCC's 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, ethical and spiritual 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. The same year, in September, a WCC climate change consultation, co-sponsored by church-related relief and development agencies, was held in Woudschoten, The Netherlands which 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. 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. The meeting of the Working Group at the Protestant Academy of Bad Boll, in Germany, in May 2009 started reflecting on an ecumenical vision on climate change beyond Copenhagen, being aware that no matter what happens in COP15 the most vulnerable communities will continue to suffer the impacts of climate change.

The recent **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. At the Central Committee meeting in 2009 a statement was adopted on Eco-justice and Ecological Debt. In February 2010, a Minute on the UNFCCC COP 15 in Copenhagen was adopted by the Executive Committee. These documents are included in the following pages.

**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 and spiritual 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. 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. The establishment of an Ecumenical Climate Secretariat hosted by Danchurchaid in Copenhagen, Denmark, to coordinate ecumenical advocacy at COP 15, has been an effective sign of collaboration between churches, specialized ministries and the WCC.

### **Climate change in context**

The WCC Climate Change work has tried to contribute constructively to the WCC's work on **economic globalisation**. The advocacy work on climate change has been centred on the inter-governmental negotiations related to the ratification and implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. At the sessions of the COPs 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 practices from around the world in grounding our own work in a broader agenda 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, meditation, 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<sup>3</sup>. The Time for Creation webpage offer, every year, resources from different regions to pray, reflect and act.

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 resources – 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 Network (EWN)<sup>4</sup>, whose Secretariat is hosted by 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.

**The WCC Climate Change webpage:** [www.oikoumene.org/climatechange](http://www.oikoumene.org/climatechange)

The WCC’s webpage on climate change offers a variety of materials. Current concerns are addressed and spiritual resources are provided. A selection of the most relevant and all the recent policy positions, study papers, publications, declarations and climate change e-newsletters of the WCC are also available. These, among others, include:

- Mobility – Prospects of Sustainable Mobility, 1997
- The Atmosphere as Global Commons, 2000
- Solidarity with Victims of 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 life, 2006

as well as the more recent statements, included in this dossier.-

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<sup>3</sup> See David G. Hallman’s, *Spiritual values for earth community*, Geneva, WCC 2000.

<sup>4</sup> See the EWN website : <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/activities/ewn-home.html>



## Minute on UNFCCC Conference of Parties - COP 15 - in Copenhagen

Adopted by the WCC Executive Committee  
Bossey, Switzerland, February 26, 2010

The WCC is disappointed with the outcome of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP 15) held in Copenhagen from 7 to 18 December 2009 as the Copenhagen Accord did not reach the expectations of the ecumenical movement and the larger civil society.

The COP-15 was seen as a significant opportunity to reach an agreement after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) which will end in 2012. The Kyoto Protocol, the binding instrument that applies to the UNFCCC, had agreed on targets for this period. The meeting in Copenhagen was expected to reach an agreement on what would comprise the commitments of the industrialized countries and economies in transition that are considered as Annex I parties of the Kyoto Protocol, those who are compelled to reduce their emissions.

The mobilization of the ecumenical movement towards and in Copenhagen was aimed at supporting widespread initiatives in order to reach a fair, ambitious and binding treaty. This should have included the recognition of the historic responsibility for the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of industrialized countries, a measurable commitment to have a maximum of 350 ppm of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, concrete ways of adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and funding in a legally binding instrument which would have framed the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

A strong collaboration between the WCC and various ecumenical actors, with the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the National Council of Churches in Denmark and Dan Church Aid helped to facilitate coordination and ecumenical participation. The ecumenical "Countdown to Copenhagen" campaign collected more than half a million signatures. The bell-ringing and prayer campaign on 13 December 2009 mobilized more than two thousand congregations, parishes, chapels and various other groups in all regions. Church leaders present in Copenhagen clearly conveyed the message to the negotiators: "Do not be afraid to make the decisions that must be made for all of humanity and for the future of creation. Do not be afraid to act for justice and for love. Do not be afraid to make a fair, ambitious and legally-binding agreement. Do not be afraid: act now!" Despite this and many other calls, the Copenhagen Accord, negotiated primarily by five countries and then opened for signatures, did not meet the desired expectations. After the deadline for the communication of voluntary reductions, the accord is still contested by many.

The World Council of Churches deeply regrets that a lack of political will from major players in COP 15 prevented achievement of a deal which would effectively respond to the climate change challenge. The moral obligations of the states to adopt a clear position regarding adaptation,

mitigation and technology transfer failed to prevail as individual state interests became prominent.

The World Council of Churches has been addressing climate change-related challenges since 1988 which has facilitated the recognition of various dimensions related to environmental, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of climate change as well as addressing the justice component. Those who suffer most due to the impact of climate change are impoverished and vulnerable communities who contribute only minimally to global warming. Climate justice requires the implementation of effective adaptation and mitigation measures as well as technology transfer in order to reduce the consequences of climate change. At the same time, climate change is considered within the broader perspective of caring for creation, which is grounded in the biblical call. The policy of the WCC on climate change has been expressed on several occasions and recently in the Statement on the tenth anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol (executive committee, September 2007), the Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change (central committee, February 2008) and the statement on ecological debt and eco-justice (central committee, September 2009).

In light of these considerations, the executive committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 23-26 February 2010:

- A. **Reiterates** the serious concerns expressed by the churches over climate change and its life-threatening effects, especially on the poor and vulnerable communities in many parts of the world, such as the low-lying islands of the Pacific or the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region;
- B. **Appreciates** the wide ecumenical participation in the process towards and in COP 15 in Copenhagen with ecumenical activities such as the ecumenical celebration, the handing over of signatures, lobbying, side events and the statement presented at the high-level segment.
- C. **Affirms** the basic thrust of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human-induced climate change;
- D. **Calls** for renewed efforts with its member churches to call on their respective governments to ensure with urgency a fair, ambitious and binding agreement to be reached as a result of the COP 16 that will take place in Mexico in December 2010;
- E. **Encourages** member churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical partners to strengthen further their commitment and to foster their cooperation with regard to climate change, especially in the process towards and at COP 16 in Mexico;
- F. **Urges** member churches and ecumenical councils to enhance inter-religious cooperation and constructive intervention, ensuring better stewardship of creation through their joint actions.



## Statement on eco-justice and ecological debt

Adopted by the WCC Central Committee  
Geneva, Switzerland, September 2, 2009

*"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors"*  
(Matthew 6:12)

1. The era of "unlimited consumption" has reached its limits. The era of unlimited profit and compensation for the few must also come to an end. Based on a series of ecumenical consultations and incorporating the perspectives of many churches, this statement proposes the recognition and application of a concept that expresses a deep moral obligation to promote ecological justice by addressing our debts to peoples most affected by ecological destruction and to the earth itself. It begins with expressing gratitude to God, whose providential care is manifested in all God's creation and the renewal of the earth for all species. Ecological debt includes hard economic calculations as well as incalculable biblical, spiritual, cultural and social dimensions of indebtedness.

2. The earth and all of its inhabitants are currently facing an unprecedented ecological crisis, bringing us to the brink of mass suffering and destruction for many. The crisis is human-induced, caused especially by the agro-industrial-economic complex and culture of the global North, which is characterized by the consumerist lifestyles of the elites of the developed and developing worlds and the view that development is commensurate with exploitation of the earth's "natural resources". What is being labelled and commodified, as "natural resources" is all of creation – a sacred reality that ought not to be commodified. Yet the Northern agro-industrial-economic complex, especially in the current era of market globalization, has used human labour and resourcefulness, as well as the properties of other life forms, to produce wealth and comfort for a few at the expense of the survival of others and their dignity.

3. Churches have been complicit in this history through their own consumption patterns and through perpetuating a theology of human rule over the earth. The Christian perspective that has valued humanity over the rest of creation has served to justify the exploitation of parts of the earth community. Yet, human existence is utterly dependant on a healthy functioning earth system. Humanity cannot manage creation. Humanity can only manage their own behaviour to keep it within the bounds of earth's sustenance. Both the human population and the human economy cannot grow much more without irreversibly endangering the survival of other life forms. Such a radical view calls for a theology of humility and a commitment on the part of the churches to learn from environmental ethics and faith traditions that have a deeper sense of an inclusive community.

4. The churches' strength lies in its prophetic witness to proclaim God's love for the whole world and to denounce the philosophy of domination that threatens the manifestation of God's love. The biblical prophets had long ago deduced the intrinsic connection between ecological crises and

socio-economic injustice, railing against the elites of their day for the exploitation of peoples and the destruction of ecosystems (Jeremiah 14: 2-7, Isaiah 23: 1-24 and Revelations 22). Based on Jesus' commandment of love, as expressed in his life and parables, the World Council of Churches (WCC) must broaden its understanding of justice and the boundaries of who our neighbours are. For many years, the WCC has called for the cancellation of illegitimate external financial debts claimed from countries of the South based on the biblical notion of jubilee (Leviticus 23). It has taken a step further in addressing the ecological dimension of economic relationships.

5. Beginning with the articulation of the ideas of "limits to growth" in a Church and Society consultation held in Bucharest in 1974 and "sustainable societies" at the 1975 Nairobi assembly, the WCC has been working deeply on ecological justice for over three decades. At the 1998 Harare assembly, the harmful impacts of globalization on people and the environment came to the fore through the Alternative Globalization Addressing People and earth (AGAPE) process, leading to the ongoing study process on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology. As an offshoot of these important ecumenical reflections and actions, the WCC, in partnership with churches and civil society organizations in Southern Africa, India, Ecuador, Canada and Sweden, initiated work on ecological debt in 2002.

6. Ecological debt refers to damage caused over time to ecosystems, places and peoples through production and consumption patterns; and the exploitation of ecosystems at the expense of the equitable rights of other countries, communities or individuals. It is primarily the debt owed by industrialized countries in the North to countries of the South on account of historical and current resource plundering, environmental degradation and the disproportionate appropriation of ecological space to dump greenhouse gases (GHGs) and toxic wastes. It is also the debt owed by economically and politically powerful national elites to marginalized citizens; the debt owed by current generations of humanity to future generations; and, on a more cosmic scale, the debt owed by humankind to other life forms and the planet. It includes social damages such as the disintegration of indigenous and other communities.

7. Grounded on an overriding priority for the impoverished and a deep moral responsibility to rectify injustices, ecological debt lenses reveal that it is the global South who is the principal ecological creditor while the global North is the principal ecological debtor. The ecological debt of the global North arises from various causal mechanisms whose impact has been intensified in the current economic crisis.

8. Under the current international financial architecture, countries of the South are pressured through conditions for loans as well as multilateral and bilateral trade and investment agreements to pursue export-oriented and resource-intensive growth strategies. Ultimately it fails to account for the costs of erosion of ecosystems and increasing pollution. Many mega-development projects (e.g. dams) in countries of the South are financed through foreign lending by international financial institutions in collaboration with undemocratic and corrupt local leaders and elites, without the informed consent of local inhabitants and with little consideration of the projects' ecological and social consequences. Moreover, industrialized Northern countries make disproportionate use of ecological space without adequate compensation, reparation or restitution. Northern countries' ecological footprint (an approximate measurement of human impacts on the environment) presently averages 6.4 ha/person. This is more than six times heavier than the footprint of Southern countries at an average of 0.8 ha/person.

9. Human-induced climate change heightens the relationship of North-South inequity even further. Industrialized countries are mainly responsible for GHG emissions causing climate change (though emerging economies in the South are becoming major contributors to global GHG emissions in absolute terms). Yet, research indicates that the South will bear a bigger burden of the adverse effects of climate change including the displacement of people living in low-lying coastal areas and small island states; the loss of sources of livelihood, food insecurity, reduced access to water and forced migration.

10. In the light of biblical teaching (cf. Matthew 6:12), we pray for repentance and forgiveness, but we also call for the recognition, repayment and restitution of ecological debt in various ways, including non-market ways of compensation and reparation, that go beyond the market's limited ability to measure and distribute.

11. The central committee of the WCC recognizes the need for a drastic transformation at all levels in life and society in order to end the ecological indebtedness and restoring right relationships between peoples and between people and the earth. This warrants a re-ordering of economic paradigms from consumerist, exploitive models to models that are respectful of localized economies, indigenous cultures and spiritualities, the earth's reproductive limits, as well as the right of other life forms to blossom. And this begins with the recognition of ecological debt.

While affirming the role of churches to play a critical role in lifting up alternative practices, as well as building the necessary political will and moral courage to effect urgent transformations, the central committee of the WCC meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 26 August - 2 September 2009:

A. *Calls* upon WCC member churches to urge Northern governments, institutions and corporations to take initiatives to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within and beyond the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which stipulates the principles of historical responsibility and "common, but differentiated responsibilities" (CDR), according to the fixed timelines set out by the UNFCCC report of 2007.

B. *Urges* WCC member churches to call their governments to adopt a fair and binding deal, in order to bring the CO<sub>2</sub> levels down to less than 350 parts per million (ppm), at the Conference of Parties (COP 15) of the UNFCCC in Copenhagen in December 2009, based on climate justice principles, which include effective support to vulnerable communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change through adaptation funds and technology transfer.

C. *Calls upon* the international community to ensure the transfer of financial resources to countries of the South to keep petroleum in the ground in fragile environments and preserve other natural resources as well as to pay for the costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation based on tools such as the Greenhouse Development Rights (GDR) Framework.

D. *Demands* the cancellation of the illegitimate financial debts of Southern countries, most urgently for the poorest nations, as part of social and ecological compensations, not as official development assistance.

E. *Recommends* that WCC member churches learn from the leadership of Indigenous Peoples, women, peasant and forest communities who point to alternative ways of thinking and living within creation, especially as these societies often emphasize the value of relationships, of caring and sharing, as well as practice traditional, ecologically respectful forms of production and consumption.

F. *Encourages* and supports WCC member churches in their advocacy campaigns around ecological debt and climate change, mindful of the unity of God's creation and of the need for collaborative working between Southern and Northern nations. Specifically *supports* the activities of churches in countries that are suffering from climate change.

G. *Calls* for continued awareness-building and theological reflection among congregations and seminary students on a new cosmological vision of life, eco-justice and ecological debt through study and action, deeper ecumenical and inter-faith formation, and through the production and dissemination of relevant theological and biblical study materials.

H. *Urges* WCC member churches and church institutions to conduct ecological debt audits in partnership with civil society, including self-assessment of their own consumption patterns. Specifically, the WCC should establish a mechanism to provide for recompense of ecological debt incurred by its gatherings, and to collect positive examples of ecological debt recognition, prevention, mitigation, compensation, reparation and restitution in partnership with civil society groups and movements.

I. *Calls* for deepening dialogue on ecological debt and the building of alliances with ecumenical, religious, economic and political actors and between the churches in Southern and Northern countries.

J. *Stresses* the importance of accompanying ongoing struggles and strategically linking and supporting the efforts of peasant, women's, youth and indigenous peoples' movements through the World Social Forum and other avenues to design alternative compensation proposals, as well as to avoid amassing more ecological debt.

K. *Calls* upon WCC member churches through their advocacy work to encourage their governments to work for the recognition of the claims of ecological debt, including the cancellation of illegitimate financial debts.

L. *Calls* upon WCC member churches to deepen their campaigns on climate change by including climate debt and advocating for its repayment by applying the ecological debt framework.

M. *Calls* upon WCC member churches to advocate for corporate social accountability within international and national legal frameworks and to challenge corporations and international financial institutions to include environmental liabilities in their accounts and to take responsibility for the policies that have caused ecological destruction.

N. *Calls* upon WCC member churches to support community-based sustainable economic initiatives, such as producer cooperatives, community land trusts and bio-regional food distributions.

O. *Encourages* churches all over the world to continue praying for the whole of creation as we commemorate on 1 September this year the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the encyclical of His All Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios I, establishing the day of the protection of the environment, God's creation.

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### *Prayer*

The following prayer is offered as a resource to enable the churches' engagement with the issue articulated above:

*Creator and creating God,  
in the wonder of your world we experience your providential care for the planet and its people.  
We offer you our thanks and praise.*

*Creator and creating God,  
in the exploitation of your world we recognize our human-centeredness and greed.  
We confess our sin before you.  
We acknowledge our need for each other as part of your global family from North and South  
And so we pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors".  
Accept our confession O God and offer us your forgiveness  
empowering us to transform our lives as individuals, churches and nations,  
proclaiming your love for the earth and its people,  
enacting the principle of 'Jubilee' in our relationships with one another and the earth,  
repaying our ecological debts in ways in ways which affirm your justice and shalom.*



## **“Be stewards of God’s creation” Minute on global warming and climate change**

Adopted by the WCC Central Committee  
Geneva, Switzerland, February 20, 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>) 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 1<sup>st</sup> (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 9<sup>th</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 on the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol

Adopted by the WCC Executive Committee  
Etchmiadzin, Armenia, September 28, 2007

*"[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.



## **No more delays: life is in peril!**

WCC Statement to the High-Level Segment of the  
16<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UNFCCC  
Delivered by Bishop Gustavo Rodriguez Vega, president of Caritas  
Mexico  
Cancun, Mexico, December 10, 2010

Madam President,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Dear Brothers and Sisters,

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy” Proverbs 31:8-9

Fifteen years have passed since we attended the First Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC which met in Berlin in 1995. Once again we are meeting, completing the first decade of the Third Millennium, in which we had put all our hopes and efforts to solve the severe and urgent problems that are challenging us as inhabitants of the blue planet, our common home.

Time has run past. The problems and their challenges are still here. Scientific knowledge, supported by statistics and climatic models, as well as plain observations made by peasant, farmers, Indigenous peoples and coastal inhabitants has confirmed that the climate is changing because of human activities and that such change will prove disastrous for life in this planet, while we are still unable to take the unavoidable steps to detain the already tangible and oncoming appalling events.

The urgent challenge is now to continue our work, you as leaders and policy makers, we as members of the civil society, as people of faith, to overcome the grave menace of climate change, taking into account firstly the care and protection of the earth as well as of the poorest and more vulnerable communities and countries.

Since the initiation of the process in the early nineties the WCC has been present in all COPs. Together with other faith based organizations, churches and religious communities, we have realized that climate change is also fundamentally a matter of spirituality and ethics. Faith traditions with their core spiritual values for earth community can play a key role in overcoming the dominant economic model where overconsumption and greed prevail.

In the WCC statement presented at the COP 13 in Bali we recalled that a change of paradigm is needed. This one must include a change in the present climate legal framework, reaffirming the Kyoto Protocol commitments and expanding them to respond to the new situation we face beyond 2010.

As faith based communities we reiterate our determination to support you in our common efforts to offer security, prosperity and dignity to the life of men, women and children around the world, caring also for all the wonders of God’s good Creation, sustaining the treasure of life. A life which needs to be lived with dignity, justice, equity and peace, where the rights of peoples to safe drinking water, sanitation, clean air and a climate apt to support life may become a reality.

Humankind is at present dancing on the edge of the abyss. We cannot afford another failure from the governments as in Copenhagen. Time is now to put aside self-interest, lack of leadership, postponements and immobility. Time is now for climate justice. Time is now for courageous, equitable and binding agreements.

Do it and you will be remembered, not only by today's world, but also by our children and our children's children as the decision makers that responsibly addressed one of the major challenges humanity faced and avoided a major tragedy for the earth and humanity within it.

## Why are the churches at the UN Conference on Climate Change in Cancun?

A Declaration by Lutheran World Federation and  
World Council of Churches delegates to COP16\*

After the failure of COP15 in Copenhagen in reaching a fair, ambitious and binding deal to effectively address the climate change crisis, many in the churches and the civil society at large have asked: why should we go to COP16 in Cancun? What for? Is it worth going?

Churches have been actively engaged in the UNFCCC negotiations since the late 80's in a process that led to the adoption of the UNFCCC in Rio in 1992. When the Convention was ratified and parties started to meet yearly in COPs, the WCC has had a delegation participating at all COPs.

The core of churches' engagement is to remind the negotiators that beyond the technical aspects of mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer and funding, there is an **ethical responsibility** which ought not to be overlooked.

In various ways churches have emphasized the various aspects of the climate change crisis: ecological, social, economic, cultural and political. These aspects should be addressed in a holistic way taking account of their interrelationship. On the basis of biblical teachings and theological convictions the churches have especially reiterated the **ethical and spiritual implications of the challenge of climate change**.

The UNFCCC already affirms some ethical considerations in the **Principles stated in the UNFCCC**. Article 3 of the Framework Convention reminds all parties what should guide the international community when responding to climate change challenges. In the turmoil of technical negotiations, unfortunately, these principles are often overlooked or ignored.

Principle 1 refers to the following critical points: a) the concern for present and future generations; b) equity as a basis for climate measures; c) the "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" and d) the role of lead developed countries should have in combating climate change. Principle 2 focuses special attention to the needs and circumstances of developing countries and vulnerable communities. These deserve particular consideration. The "Precautionary Principle" is addressed in Principle 3, stressing the importance of anticipating, preventing or minimizing the causes and mitigating the effects of climate change. Interestingly, the principle already responds to climate skeptics, affirming that "the lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing such measures". The right to development, specifically sustainable development, is addressed in Principle 4, while links between climate change and economics are highlighted in Principle 5, reminding how intertwined they are.

In the churches' perspective, **justice** must be the basic criterion of applied ethics in all decisions concerning the measures to cope with climate change<sup>5</sup>. Although climate change is a global issue affecting all peoples and nations, those who are and will increasingly be affected by negative climate change consequences are the vulnerable communities who have contributed the least to

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<sup>5</sup> WCC Minute on Global warming and climate Change, WCC Central Committee, February 2008.

global emissions. These include women and children, indigenous peoples, poorest communities, people with disabilities and inhabitants of coastal low lying areas. Vulnerable communities and states are also much more dependent on natural resources for their subsistence and do not have the means to mitigate emissions and to adapt to climate change. Their survival is at risk, and justice requires that the nations most responsible historically for the adverse ecological conditions should take the greatest responsibility towards the adaptation of these vulnerable communities and nations. The churches have echoed this principle of justice in statements to earlier COPs, and repeat it here at COP 16 in Cancun.

The call for eco-justice and the recognition of ecological debt<sup>6</sup> are part of the churches' witness for the care of Creation. The formulation of demands to repair and repay the climate debt to the poorest, the most vulnerable, future generations and the Earth itself has become the prophetic stance of the churches as it confronts the most serious of ecological crises, the ethical and moral crisis of climate change.

**Climate justice** should undergird the present negotiations. Churches, through lobby work, side events and statements to the plenary, recall once again this forgotten dimension.

The holistic approach to climate change that churches proclaim also includes the **spiritual dimension** which must not be overlooked or ignored in the deliberations over political and economic interests. The hosting of ecumenical or interfaith celebrations during the COPs, as well as other explicit expressions like demonstrations and messages from local congregations and communities, stress the particular contribution that faith based groups and organizations can and must bring to the debate. It is our hope that the ethical and spiritual considerations will be taken seriously in the follow-up deliberations after COP 16.

There is, therefore, **a moral obligation for the churches and faith communities** to participate in the negotiations of the international community in Cancun and in the future. Their contribution is twofold: to urge the world to act for a more just and equitable world and at the same time, rooted in their spiritual teachings, convey a message of hope to the whole world.

*\* Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and World Council of Churches (WCC) delegations to COP16 in Cancun include the following: Lic Elias Crisostomo Abramides (Ecumenical Patriarchate, Argentina); Lic Abraham Colque (ISEAT – Bolivia); Rev Freddy De Alwis (CCA – Thailand); Rev Henrik Grape (CoS – Sweden); Joy Kennedy (UCC – Canada); David Le Page (SAFCEI – South Africa); Lic Juan Luis Loza (FUMEC – Mexico); Prof Dr Jesse Mugambi (Anglican Church of Kenya); Sister Patricia Nagle, IHM (USA); Lic Sergio Rios Carrillo (LWF – Nicaragua); Prof Dr Barbara Rossing (LWF – USA); M. Abdus Sabur (AMAN – Thailand); Rev Bill and Rev Carol Somplatsky-Jarman (PCUSA); Dr Larisa Skuratovskaya (Academy of Medical Sciences – Russia) and Dr Guillermo Kerber (WCC staff - Uruguay/Switzerland).*

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<sup>6</sup> WCC Statement on Eco-justice and Ecological Debt, WCC Central Committee, Geneva, September 2009



## **A sign of hope for the future for people of good will**

WCC Statement to the High-Level Segment of the  
15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UNFCCC  
Delivered by Dr. Christian Friis-Bach,  
International Director, Danchurchaid  
Copenhagen, Denmark, 18 December 2009

Mister President,  
Distinguished Delegates to this United Nations Climate Conference,  
Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Since long ago, we, as members of the world civil society promised to take the lead in establishing just, participatory and sustainable societies. The present day reality shows that our sincere efforts have not been enough to bring in the age of social justice and peace. On the contrary, our most vulnerable communities are at stake, as well as the rest of the world, threatened by the impact of the already evident effects of climate change.

As we declared during COP13-CMP3 in Bali, Indonesia, in 2007, a change of paradigm is imperative. We must do it here and now. We must transform ourselves: transform our communities, transform our societies, transform the world, and in this meeting transform our politics, as a basis for our worldwide actions to save our planet from the catastrophic and suicidal consequences of climate change.

As people of faith we beg and urge you to journey together on the basis of unilateral ambitious, convincing and trust building moves in order to speed up the global process toward a visible and verifiable improvement of life on earth in every continent, in every country, in every place.

In view of the need of trust-building steps we ask you to admit to be aware that all countries at some moments fail in mutual understanding, sensitivity and love. We ask you to confess that as a negotiation tactic every country tends to persist in denying its own faults while pointing a splinter in its neighbours' eyes, using all means and possible occasions to claim its own moral superiority. We ask you to transform international politics by overcoming these weaknesses, for the future of humankind and the earth as we know it.

We recognize that the threats of climate change are ever-growing. Yet we do not pay adequate attention to the warning bells the scientific community has raised. We need to ACT now. The Copenhagen global agreement is and should be a call to immediate action. Moreover, we firmly believe the Copenhagen agreement is and should be a sign of hope for the future; a sign of hope for humanity, and for the continuation of life on planet earth, our common home.

We said it is a sign of hope for the future. But the future has already reached us: the future is here, the future is now. The end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Commitment Period under the Kyoto Protocol in 2012 will

mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stockholm Conference! By 2012 humanity will have spent four decades trying to arrive to a consensus on how and when to correct our misuse of the earth's natural non-renewable resources. The time is now to take decisions that will guarantee that in 2012 we have *implemented* an adequate answer to the worries that were raised in 1972!

It will be a subject of justice and wisdom towards our planet and the entire good creation of God, to see the same promptness from the global community in responding to the climate change crisis, as the way in which it dealt with the financial and economic crisis. It is like people say: never waste a good crisis.

The "Countdown to Copenhagen" has finally come to its end. Distinguished Delegates, the world, the people that gave you the power to find a solution to this intricate and **multifaceted** problem, expect the result of your arduous negotiations along these last years. The result we expect must be imbedded in justice, equity, solidarity, ethics and love: love for you yourselves, for your families, for your neighbour, for your offspring and for our life-sustaining planet.

We have a hope and the sign of hope we foresee is a Copenhagen global agreement we are expecting to receive from you today. Do not deceive us. It will be a sign of hope for the future, and it will bring peace on earth to people of good will, today and for the years to come. We are all members of one family living together, breathing together, and dreaming together.

Dreaming a better world for all is possible.

***Do not be afraid! Act now!***

Thank you very much.

## ***Do not be afraid! Act now!***

Message from church leaders to UNFCCC - COP 15 negotiators

We, leaders of churches and international church organizations present in Copenhagen for the UN Climate Change Conference reiterate the Gospel message “Do not be afraid!” Act now!

This message was echoed by the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and reflected by the unprecedented mobilization of international civil society during the first 10 days of this conference.

Do not be afraid to make the decisions that must be made for all of humanity and for the future of creation.

Do not be afraid to act for justice and for love.

Do not be afraid to make a fair, ambitious and legally-binding agreement.

Do not be afraid, act now!

At this crucial stage in the negotiations we would like to reiterate our firm conviction that there is an undeniable historical responsibility on the part of the industrialized countries for the climate change crisis that we currently face. The injustice is that those who are suffering the worst consequences of this crisis have contributed the least to causing this situation. This is a matter of justice and a call to moral responsibility. We would like to underline the importance of legally-binding commitments to addressing this crisis that recognize a common and differentiated responsibility. Accountability to these principles would be a sign of hope to all of us. We welcome initiatives from developed countries to step up the ambition of emission reduction targets and to provide adequate funding for adaptation measures to be implemented. We welcome initiatives taken by developing countries to limit and reduce their emissions.

Thousands of churches all over the world rang the bells on Sunday to express alarm for the climate change crisis and to call to prayer and hopeful and committed action. We continue to pray for courageous action. As government leaders you now must show moral leadership out of love for humanity and creation.

Do not be afraid, act now!

*Members of the Ecumenical Delegation at COP15, including:*

*Archbishop Desmond Tutu; Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC); Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, WCC general secretary-elect; Bishop of Greenland Sofie Petersen; Moderator Mardi Tindal, United Church of Canada; Rev. Tofiga Falani, Congregational Christian Church of Tuvalu; Bishop of Roskilde Peter Fischer-Møller; Prof. Dr. Barbara Rossing, Lutheran World Federation; Rob van Drimmelen, general secretary of APRODEV; Rev. Henrik Stubkjaer, general secretary of Danchurchaid, Rev. Mads Christoffersen, general secretary of National Council of Churches of Denmark.*



## **Faith and Feasibility Responsibly searching for a “new heaven and a new earth”**

WCC Statement to the High-Level Segment of the  
14<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to the UNFCCC  
Delivered by Most Rev Anders Wejryd,  
Archbishop of Uppsala, Sweden  
Poznań, Poland, December 12, 2008

Mr. President,  
Distinguished Participants in this United Nations Climate Conference,

Two weeks ago 29 committed leaders from all major faith traditions convened at the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Summit and signed a strong manifesto, which is brought to you as an appendix to this statement. People of different faiths give their support to change governed by justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love.

In December 2007 during our message to the plenary of the High Level Segment of COP13-CMP3 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the WCC affirmed that as Faith Communities we are convinced a change of paradigm is needed, if the world is to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change. In February this year, the WCC Central Committee in its *Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change* called for “a profound change in the relationship towards nature, economic policies, consumption, production and technological patterns”. It was added that societies must shift to a new vision where the operative principles are justice, equity, solidarity, human development and care for the environment. And it claimed to the world: “This far and no further: act fast and act now!”

The process towards Copenhagen, started in Bali, must strengthen the commitment of the international community to go beyond the Kyoto Protocol in order to effectively address the threat of global warming. The journey from COP1 in Berlin in 1995 has been a long one. The WCC has been present in all the UN Climate Conferences around the world, expressing solidarity with victims of climate change, a.o. in African countries and Pacific Island States, who already suffer from increasing droughts, floods and the sea-level rise. We have supported them in their demand for climate justice for all.

Meeting this year in Poznań, we feel the urgency as we think we have only a small ‘window of opportunity’ of less than 10 years in which to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, limit atmospheric temperature rise to 2°C and at the same time prevent the most detrimental impacts on nature, societies, economies and development opportunities. But as a Christian fellowship of churches we also do this with faith, because we know the needed changes are possible and believe in the promise of “...a new heaven and a new earth...” (Book of Revelation, 21: 1), where justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love will prevail. As churches, faith is the reason for us to act. We share this inspiration with other faith traditions. Thus the feasibility of adequately addressing climate change depends very much on the political will and consequent

decisions this COP will make. It is our conviction that what is needed for getting negotiations moving and people changing is a convincing argument on the feasibility of climate proof, sustainable societies and lifestyles that will enhance life with dignity. Faith communities have an important role to play.

First and foremost, ambitious politics are needed. As a fellowship of churches, representing more than 500 million people in the world we urge State Parties and the international community to renew, strengthen and deepen their commitment regarding climate change and global warming. Once again, we affirm the basic thrust of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human induced climate change. We renew our call for a prompt implementation of the obligations of the Kyoto Protocol as this will give a convincing signal that climate change and responsibilities are taken seriously.

But emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are still increasing, which continues to be a matter of alarm. We call governments to take much more radical steps in terms to cut emissions. The signatories of the Uppsala manifesto call for cuts in developed countries by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and 90 per cent by 2050 against 1990 levels. At the same time ambitious quantitative and short term goals for the use of renewable energy are needed.

The issue of adaptation still has been given insufficient attention. This may be attributed to the unwillingness of industrialized countries to accept real responsibility for climate change and to the lack of clarity about the concept of adaptation. Adaptation must be firmly based on human rights. It must include efforts to reduce people's vulnerability and strengthen their strategies to cope with a changing climate and manage and strengthen the local ecosystems that people, to greater or lesser degrees, depend on for their livelihoods. Comprehensive policies and adequate funding for adaptation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change have to be implemented.

A much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective and equitable global climate policy regime built on the ethical imperatives of justice, equity and solidarity. On a more practical level this pleads for responsibility principles like 'the polluter pays', the precautionary principle, maximum risk reduction and "the polluter changes". Justice and solidarity are interpreted in terms of priority and support for the poorest and those most affected by climate change and the right to sustainable development for those living in poverty and marginalization.

Mr President, distinguished participants,

Once more, as a fellowship of churches, we appeal to you to continue the process in order to reach the unambiguous solution we are expecting. Despite the threat of climate change with a sense of wonder we look at life on planet Earth. It is a miracle and a gift! We all share the responsibility of seeing conscious caretakers of this home of ours. We shall be with you and have you in our prayers, as you already are in the prayers of millions of people around the world.

Act here and act now! Thank you.



## **This far and no further: Act fast and act now!**

WCC Statement to the High-Level Segment of the  
13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 13) to the UNFCCC  
Bali, Indonesia, December 14, 2007

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 organizations, 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!”**

# WCC's participation at UNCED and at the Conference of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Lic. Elias Crisóstomo Abramides  
WCC Focal Point to the UNFCCC  
WCC Working Group on Climate Change  
Argentina

## Introduction

**UNCED - United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 3-14, 1992.** Delegations from 178 countries, heads of state and heads of government of more than 100 countries, and representatives of more than 1,000 NGOs attended the meeting. Four preparatory committees or "Prep-Comms" met prior to UNCED during 1990-1992, to produce the texts of the five major UNCED agreements:

1. **Agenda 21:** a 40-chapter Statement of Goals and potential programs related to sustainable development.
2. **The Rio Declaration:** a brief statement of principles on sustainable development.
3. **The UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD):** a binding international agreement aimed at strengthening national control and preservation of biological resources.
4. **The Statement of Forest Principles (UN Declaration on Forests):** a non-binding agreement on development, preservation, and management of the Earth's remaining forests.
5. **The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** a binding international agreement that seeks to limit or reduce emissions of gases, mainly carbon dioxide and methane, associated with the potential for global warming.

Historically, UNCED is a descendant of the 1972 **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE)**. That meeting in Stockholm, Sweden was the first major modern international gathering on human activities in relationship to the environment. The conference produced a set of principles in the "Stockholm Declaration" and led to the founding of the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** (1973 New York, 1982 Nairobi). The International Day of the Environment, June 5, was established to remember UNCHE inauguration ceremony that took place on June 5, 1972.

At the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, the WCC organized an Ecumenical Gathering: "Searching for a New Heaven and a New Earth", at the Baixada Fluminense as well as a WCC tent with daily activities at the Expo Rio-92 (ECO-92).

Once the UNFCCC was ratified by the sufficient number of state parties, it entered into force in 1994. During the first quarter of 1995, the first **Conference of the Parties, COP1**, was convened in Berlin, Germany. During its sessions, the Parties meeting in plenary voted the city of Bonn to become the new of the UNFCCC Secretariat that until that date had been functioning in Geneva, Switzerland.

## WCC's participation at COPs

**COP 1, Berlin, Germany, 28 March – 7 April 1995.** Two **Press Conferences** were offered by the WCC delegation: one at the venue of COP1 and a second one at Berlin's Town Hall. An Ecumenical Celebration on Climate Change was organized at the Kaiser Wilhelm Gedächtnis Kirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church)

**COP 2, Geneva, Switzerland, 8 – 19 July 1996.** **"A Profoundly Ethical and Spiritual Challenge"**, WCC Statement delivered by the WCC General Secretary. At the Ecumenical Centre, an exhibition on climate change was organised and the **WCC Petition Campaign** on Climate Change was launched. In the Ecumenical Centre's Chapel the WCC hosted a Special Prayer Service on July 12<sup>th</sup>.

**COP 3, Kyoto, Japan, 1 – 12 2 December 1997.** **"A Matter of Justice. An Interfaith Statement"** was delivered by Dr. David G. Hallman. An Interfaith Climate Change Celebration was organised at the Kawaramachi Roman Catholic Cathedral of Kyoto, with the presence of Buddhist, Shinto and Christian hierarchy and UNFCCC high officers. A procession of faithful took place along the city of Kyoto, with a final religious ceremony and a lecture at the Shinto Shrine. Keynote speaker: Argentine Ambassador Raul A. Estrada Oyuela.

**COP 4, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2 – 13 November 1998** – The Community of Faith (Religious NGOs) Statement was delivered to the COP plenary by the Roman Catholic "Franciscans International" Organization. The Ecumenical Celebration on Climate Change, was organised by the WCC together with CEICA (Ecumenical Commission of Christian Churches in Argentina), with the auspices of CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches) at the Roman Catholic Basilica of Our Lady of Pilar. The **"Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change"**, were presented by David G. Hallman at the Celebration. Attendees to the celebration included Dr. Michael Zammit Cutajar (UNFCCC Executive Secretary) and Argentine Ambassador Raul A. Estrada Oyuela, among high UNFCCC officers and delegates. A workshop on: **"Stewardship of Natural Resources: Christian Faith and Climate Change"** was organized by the WCC with CLAI at ISEDET (Protestant Theological Faculty) with Ambassador Estrada Oyuela as keynote speaker.

**COP 5, Bonn, Germany, 25 October – 5 November 1999.** On Reformation Day, 31 October, a Worship Service on Climate Change was organised at the Protestant Redemptor Church, Bad Godesberg, Bonn with **"A Mediation on Climate Change"**, delivered by Lic. Elias C. Abramides, Argentina. The Community of Faith (Religious NGOs) Statement was delivered to the COP plenary by the Roman Catholic "Franciscans International" Organization

**COP 6, The Hague, The Netherlands, 13 – 24 November 2000.** **"The Earth's Atmosphere: Responsible Caring and Equitable Sharing for a Global Commons. A Justice Statement on Climate Change"** was the title of the WCC's Statement delivered by WCC Central Committee Member Rev. Dr. Angeline Walker-Smith, USA. The WCC Ecumenical Celebration on Climate Change was conducted at the Dutch Protestant Kloosterkerk Chapel in The Hague, the Queen of the Netherlands Royal Chapel. At the celebration, Bishop Emmanuel of Reghion, special envoy to the Celebration and Permanent Representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium, delivered the message prepared by the Ecumenical Patriarch for this occasion. A WCC Exhibition Desk installed at the venue, shared booklets, papers and

other materials on activities carried on by the WCC on climate change throughout the two weeks of the COP.

**COP 6 Part 2, Bonn, Germany, 16 – 27 July 2001.** A WCC organized **Press Conference** at the COP venue brought together Dr. Jürgen Trittin, German Minister of Environment, Natural Resources and Nuclear Security, Mr. Jürgen Meier, Forum on Environment and Development, Germany, Ms. Julia Ratzmann, “Pazific-Informationsstelle”, Germany and Lic. Elias C. Abramides, WCC Working Group on Climate Change, Argentina, who presented a paper on “The WCC Presence at COP6 Part II”.

**COP 7, Marrakech, Morocco, 29 October – 9 November 2001.** The WCC Statement on: “**The Role of Religions. An Interfaith Statement**”, was delivered by Lic. Elias C. Abramides, Argentina. A one-day WCC Side Event “**Colloquium on Religion and Environment with particular focus on Islamic and Christian Perspectives on Environment and Climate Change**” included, in the morning, presentations from Ahmed El Khamlichi, Director, Dar El Hadith El Hassania, Rabat, Morocco on “*Islamic Perspectives on Environment and Climate Change*” and Father Henri Madelin, Editor in Chief, Etudes, Jesuit Revue, Paris, France, on “*Christian Perspectives on Environment and Climate Change*”. Documents were distributed in English, French, and Arabic. In the afternoon keynote speakers were Ambassador Raul A. Estrada Oyuela and Dr. Michael Zammit Cutajar (UNFCCC Executive Secretary).

**COP 8, Delhi, India, 23 October – 1 November 2002.** The WCC Statement to the COP plenary “**A Call to Action in Solidarity with victims of Climate Change**” was delivered by Rev. William Somplatsky-Jarman, USA. Active participation in side events conducted by INECC (Indian Network on Ethics and Climate Change) and by CSE (Centre for Science and Environment), India.

**COP 9, Milan, Italy, 1 – 12 December 2003.** The WCC Statement: “**The Earth does not belong to us: we belong to the Earth – An Ethics Statement**” was delivered by Ms. Nafisa Goga D’Souza, India. The statement included as an Appendix the “Message on occasion of COP 9 of the World Conference on Religion and Peace - Religions for Peace”, Milan, under the auspices of the Ecumenical Council of Milan. An Interfaith Celebration on Climate Change was held at the Roman Catholic Basilica of the Santi Apostoli e Nazaro Maggiore with the WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Konrad Raiser presenting a message.

**COP 10, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 6 – 17 December 2004.** The WCC Statement: “**Moving Beyond Kyoto with Equity, Justice and Solidarity**” was delivered by Lic. Elias C. Abramides, Argentina. The Ecumenical Celebration, organized by the WCC and CEICA with the auspices of CLAI took place at the Roman Catholic Saint Tarcisius Church, with Ambassador Estrada Oyuela as keynote speaker.

**COP 11 – MOP 1, Montreal, Canada, 28 November – 9 December 2005.** The WCC Statement: “**We would like to light a candle...**” was delivered by Ms. Joy Kennedy (Canada) and Ms. Frances Namoumou (Fiji). The Statement included “**A Spiritual Declaration on Climate Change**” offered by the Faith Communities’ Participants. An “Ecumenical and Interfaith Celebration on Climate Change” was organised and conducted at the Saint Joseph Oratory, a Roman Catholic Basilica on

the slopes of Mount Royal, Montreal, a National Canadian Monument, with the participation of the Canadian Minister of the Environment, high UNFCCC officers and delegates, and faithful.

**COP 12 – MOP 2, Nairobi, Kenya, 6 – 17 November 2006.** The WCC Statement: **“Climate Justice for All”** was delivered by Professor Dr. Jesse Mugambi, Kenya. The WCC delegation joined the public demonstration and ceremony on climate change along the streets of Nairobi organised by Caritas – AACC (All Africa Conference of Churches). The WCC also co-sponsored a Public Lecture on **“Our Climate, Our Survival”** at All Saints Anglican Cathedral Hall.

**COP 13 – CMP 3, Bali, Indonesia, 3 – 14 December 2007.** The WCC Statement to the joint plenary of COP13 and CMP3, **“This far and no further: Act fast and act now!”** was delivered by Ms. Nafisa Goga D’Souza, India. The WCC hosted the **Side Event: “The right to development in a climate constrained world”**, co-sponsored and conducted by EcoEquity (UK), Stockholm Environment Institute (Sweden), Christian Aid (UK) and Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany). The interfaith celebration co-organized with the Protestant Christian Church in Bali was followed by a video presentation of the Archbishop of Canterbury on **“Climate Change as a Justice Issue”**, Nusa Dua International Church, (Hill of Prayers), Bali.

**COP 14 – CMP 4, Poznań, Poland, 1 – 12 December 2008.** The WCC Statement to the joint plenary of COP14 and CMP4, on: **“Faith and Feasibility: Responsibly searching for a new heaven and a new earth”** was delivered by The Most Reverend Anders Wejryd, Archbishop of Uppsala and Primate of the Church of Sweden, Sweden. It included as an Appendix **(the) The Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto 2008**. The WCC proposed a consolidated side event with the Environmental Ethics, Science, and Law Department of the Penn State University, United States of America: **“The moral and ethical dimensions of post-Kyoto climate change issues. Religious Principles and the Climate Change Negotiations”**. **An ecumenical celebration was organized by the WCC** with the Polish Ecumenical Council, at the Evangelical Parish of the Augsburg Confession in Poznań, in the framework of the commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**COP 15 – CMP 5, Copenhagen, Denmark, 7 – 18 December 2009.** The International Climate Secretariat established in Copenhagen, Denmark, by the WCC, APRODEV and other partners and hosted by DanChurchAid, coordinated the ecumenical participation and activities in COP 15, in collaboration with the Church of Denmark and the National Council of Churches in Denmark. Activities included, among others, the ecumenical participation at the Climate March on December 12<sup>th</sup>, the handover of signatures of the **“Countdown to CO<sub>2</sub>penhagen – Time for Climate Justice”** Ecumenical Campaign, the Ecumenical Celebration at the Lutheran Cathedral, followed by the Bellringing, on December 13<sup>th</sup>. WCC in COP 15 organized a side event with Caritas Internationalis and other partners and delivered its statement to the High Level Ministerial Segment of the Conference.

**COP 15 – CMP 5, Copenhagen, Denmark, 7 – 18 December 2009.** The WCC Statement to the High Level Ministerial Segment of COP15 and CMP5: **“A Sign of Hope for the Future for the People of Goodwill”** was delivered by Dr. Christian Friis Bach, International Director of DanChurchAid. The WCC presented a consolidated side event with CARITAS Internationalis: **“Renew the face of the earth – Faith-based approach to climate justice”**. The **Ecumenical Climate Secretariat** established in Copenhagen by the WCC, APRODEV and other partners and hosted by DanChurchAid, coordinated the ecumenical participation and activities during COP15-CMP5, in collaboration with the Church of Denmark and the National Council of Churches in Denmark. Activities included among others, the handover of thousands of signatures of the **“Countdown to CO<sub>2</sub>popenhagen – Time for Climate Justice”** Ecumenical Campaign, by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to the UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer; the **“Ecumenical Celebration for Creation”** conducted at the Copenhagen Lutheran Cathedral ‘Vor Frue Kirke – The Church of Our Lady’, hosted by The National Council of Churches in Denmark in collaboration with DanChurchAid and the World Council of Churches, followed by the **“350 Bell-Ringing”** of churches around the world; and the **“Tick, Tick, Tick - Time for Climate Justice”** global campaign. Also, the WCC participated in various religious events organised by the churches in Copenhagen, and in activities at the ‘Klima Forum’.

**COP 16 – CMP 6, Cancún, México - 29 November to 10 December 2010.** The WCC Statement to the High Level Segment of the Conference, on: **“A Plea for Immediate Action – No more delays: Life on Earth is in peril”**, was delivered by the Roman Catholic Bishop Monsignor Gustavo Rodríguez Vega, president of CARITAS México, on behalf of the WCC and the Non-Governmental Faith Based Organisations. The **“Inter-Religious Celebration on Climate Change – United in prayer, united for the Creation we need”** took place at Cancun’s Parroquia de Cristo Resucitado - Parish of the Resurrected Christ on 4 December, under the auspices of the Mexican Episcopal Commission of Social Pastoral (CEPS), CARITAS México, CARITAS Internationalis, the WCC, the Conference of Mexican Bishops (CEM), the Archdiocese of Yucatán A.R., and CEDIC. The WCC presented a consolidated side event with CARITAS Internationalis and ACT Alliance-Action of Churches Together, on **“Faith based organisations advocate for climate justice”**, under the auspices of Caritas Internationalis, the Nicaraguan Council of Evangelical Churches (CEPAD-ACT Alliance), Instituto Superior Ecueménico Andino de Teología-Superior Andean Ecumenical Institute of Theology (ISEAT, Bolivia), and the Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN, Thailand), the Church of Sweden, and the Presbyterian Church-PCUSA. The WCC, APRODEV and other partners established the **‘Ecumenical Coordination Group’** which coordinated ecumenical meetings and other activities. A declaration was released in Cancun by the WCC and the LWF (Lutheran World Federation) entitled **“Why are the churches at the UN Climate Conference in Cancun”**, underlining the ethical and spiritual issues that lead the churches to be so engaged in the climate change issue.