

Declaration from Woudschoten

(from the consultation “Climate and Water: Common Gifts, Related Threats”,
Zeist, The Netherlands, October 3-8, 2004)

Human induced climate change is proving to have an extensive range of negative impacts on our Planet. We are impelled to act with urgency on the effects of climate change because it is our responsibility as people of faith to address the destructive exploitation of the Earth, its resources and its atmosphere.

1. Impacts on those most affected by climate change (humans & non-human) are now evident, as experienced in these regions:

Pacific Region

- Increasingly severe climate impacts on the islands and inhabitants of the Pacific Ocean region are having a devastating effect as predictions are being realized that the region will warm by 0.6 to 3.5 degrees Celsius in this century, (a rate of warming which is much larger than the observed changes during the last century and very likely without precedent during at least the last 10,000 years.)
- Rising sea levels resulting from thermal expansion of oceans, melting ice caps and increased precipitation is the most significant negative effect of higher temperatures for the Pacific peoples.
- Projections are that sea levels will rise by as much as 5mm per year over the next 100 years as a result of global warming, which are leading to -
- Submersion of land and salination of the fresh groundwater sources.
- Island populations face imminent displacement due to sea level rise.

Coastal Regions

- Loss of coastal land and infrastructure due to catastrophic events, erosion, inundation and storm surges.
- Increase in frequency and severity of cyclones with risks to human life, health, homes and communities.
- Loss of coral reefs with implications for the sea eco-systems on which the livelihoods of many Islanders depend.
- Changes in rainfall patterns with increased droughts in some areas and more rainfall with extensive flooding in other areas.

- Threats to drinkable water due to changes in rainfall, sea-level rise and inundation.
- Increase in the levels of salinity of the water tables of the islands causing drastic changes in diet.
- Loss of local agricultural products (eg. sugarcane, yams, taro and cassava) due to temperature extremes and rainfall changes.
- Human health impacts with increased incidence of dengue fever and diarrhea.
- Displacement due to sea level rise.

Tropical and Sub-Tropical Regions

- Increasing drought and desertification across the band of the tropical latitudes.
- Encroachment and pressure on old growth forests being cut down for firewood and to provide arable land.
- Increased vulnerability to invasive species and pests.
- Intensification of exploration and extraction of fossil fuels leading to environmental degradation.
- Increased industrial pollution from neighbouring regions further degrading the environment.

Mountainside Regions

- Melting of glaciers, mountain ice caps and permafrost causing increased erosion.
- Retraction of the snow line causing landslides and deforestation.
- Loss of water sources for major river systems.
- Loss of freshwater sources creating drought conditions for mountain ecosystems.
- Loss of agricultural crops due to drought (eg. rice, coffee, vegetables, fruits and nuts.)

Polar Regions

- Warming at a rate twice as fast as previously predicted
- Melting of the permafrost.
- Release of new greenhouse gases (GHGs) (especially methane) into the atmosphere.
- Loss of freshwater sources draining into the ocean.
- Threat to Indigenous food security and culture.
- Threat to species throughout the food chain, from polar bears to plankton.
- Melting of the polar ice caps, water levels rising, and desalinization of the seas.

- Weakening of the thermohaline circulation of ocean currents leading to variability in the strength of the “global conveyor belt”.

Temperate Regions

- Unpredictability of weather patterns and precipitation.
- Changing habitats as warming trends push forest and woodland and prairie boundaries.
- Changes to agricultural uses because of rapidly changed soil and water conditions.
- Introduction of new vector borne diseases (eg. West Nile virus, malaria, dengue.)
- Drying up of the Aral Sea.

2. URGENCY TO ACT

Global Anxiety

- We are deeply worried about the increasing probabilities of being the last generation with the potential to reverse the effects of this environmental and human-made degradation.
- We observe the degradation and extinction of the earth’s biodiversity at a global level.
- We are deeply concerned about the increased exploitation and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, lands and territories.
- We encounter economic-social- environmental disintegration due to the increased severity and frequency of changing climate patterns and of geophysical activities.
- We encounter the increased insecurity and social /psychological disintegration of humanity.
- We note with deep concern the increased numbers of ecological refugees and internally displaced peoples.

Faced with the current environmental crisis, we acknowledge that high-energy, consumeristic, monocultural lifestyles need to change. We see this moment as an opportunity to transform our lifestyle into one that is in harmony with God, our Earth, and our brothers and sisters. Our faith demands that we confront the impediments to achieving these ends. We encourage renewed efforts leading to the pathways of justice, equity, equality and peace. It is time to re-envision and redefine global security for the greater and long-term good of the whole Earth community.

Reinforcing this urgency we:

- Affirm our commitment to care for the Earth as our response to God’s love for creation;
- Declare as forcefully as we can the urgency of the threat of human-induced climate change to lives, livelihoods, societies, cultures, future generations, and eco-systems;
- Engage our churches in education and action on climate change;
- Commit ourselves to ecumenical collaboration among our churches, and with other religious and secular bodies to increase the effectiveness of our national and regional efforts to address the effects of climate change;
- Call on our sisters and brothers in Christ throughout the world to act in solidarity with us to reduce the causes of human-induced climate change. We issue this call particularly to churches in the highly industrialized nations whose societies are historically responsible for the majority of polluting emissions. We further urge these countries to take responsibility for the ecological damage that they have caused by paying for the costs of adaptation to the impacts that are anticipated;
- Count on the commitment of church-related specialized ministries (relief and development agencies,) to integrate climate change and adaptation projects into their policy-development, education and advocacy.

3. Kyoto Protocol¹

We welcome the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Russian Government. While this will bring the protocol into effect on February 16, 2005, we have yet to see the processes of implementation that are to be adopted by the signatory countries. Notwithstanding the successful diplomatic efforts, this is only a modest first step in the process and we call on the world community to negotiate more substantial measures beyond those of the protocol to accelerate and implement adaptation and mitigation strategies.

We are convinced that in contrast to the pragmatic way in which emission reduction obligations and other responsibilities have been divided between countries in the Kyoto Protocol, a much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective, equitable and justifiable global climate policy regime.

Contraction & Convergence²:

Looking towards the upcoming negotiations on the second commitment period, the Contraction and Convergence Model finds much attention. It corresponds to the initial vision of the Convention that requires reduction of CO₂ emissions of industrialized countries and leaves space for the development of developing countries. For many, it presents a starting point for deliberations and negotiations directed to finding a justice-based global approach to climate change. As we participate in this discussion, we want to underline that the model does not do justice to some important dimensions that need to be addressed.

We urge the countries of the world to develop and agree on a differentiated climate policy regime reflecting these requirements and along the lines of absolute emission reduction goals for industrialized countries like in the Kyoto Protocol, but allocated according to the country-specific contours in the C&C model. A small increase in reduction commitments should be included in order to compensate for the emissions of some developing countries that may be higher than their share according to the C&C model.

4. Theological Reflection

A Biblical understanding of wholeness and interrelatedness of creation:

All life is always connected to other life. Each human life depends on other life. Biologically we as humans survive by other lifeforms. Each is connected to the other. Socially, ecologically and spiritually we live in communion with all other life.

¹ *The Kyoto Protocol* was negotiated by countries through the United Nations in 1997 in Kyoto Japan. The Protocol sets out actual targets with a set time frame for industrialized countries (referred to as Annex 1 countries in the Protocol) to reduce their polluting greenhouse gas emissions that are leading to climate change. The Protocol includes provisions (e.g. the Clean Development Mechanism) that allow highly industrialized (Annex 1) nations to meet part of their targets by funding sustainable projects in developing nations. In order for the Kyoto Protocol to become international law it requires at least 55 countries to ratify it by adopting it in their parliaments or legislatures. More than 100 nations have so far ratified. But the Protocol must also be ratified by highly-industrialized (Annex 1) countries making up at least 55% of total greenhouse gas emissions in industrialized nations. Australia and United States, although major emitters, have announced that they will not ratify the Protocol. This leaves Russia as the only highly-industrialized (Annex 1) country with enough emissions to meet the 55% criteria in the Protocol and thus bring it into effect. Russia recently committed to ratification.

² *Contraction and Convergence* is a policy scenario for stabilization of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, formulated by the Global Common Institute (London), on the basis of the principles of:

- differential responsibility of developing and developed countries (due to higher historic and actual emissions in industrialized countries),
- equity (equal per capita emissions of greenhouse gases) and
- sustainability

taking into account:

- the justified claims of developing countries that they need 'environmental utilization space' for further (sustainable) development (economic, social, cultural, technological etc.),
- the different population growth rates in developed and developing countries that are to be expected for the current century and
- the consideration that developed countries are to a high extent trapped in a carbon based society and economy, so that they need some time to make the actual change of their CO₂ emissions to a drastically lower level, although the rights of developing countries to a per capita equal share of the allowable atmospheric emissions should be acknowledged right away. For a description of the model see Appendix in *Moving Beyond Kyoto with Equity, Justice and Solidarity*, WCC, Oct. 2004

The vision in Genesis 2 of God making humans out of dust is about the interrelatedness between humans and all other kinds of life on Earth. This Earth is the place of God's incarnating, which marks the importance of creation as a holy place. If we regard creation as a gift of grace where the pattern of life is given to us, then our efforts must be to live a life that aims for justice and sustainability for all that share in the life of creation.

Solidarity with all those most affected, future generations and the Living Earth:

When we break the bread in communion we share the gifts of the Earth. Grain falls onto the soil and with water and sun, more grain is created. People harvest the grain. Through their work and energy, they make bread to share and feed each other.

Based on this understanding:

- we can never accept that some should have more of the goods of the Earth and others less.
- we are also called to work for justice; hence when some people of Earth are more affected than others and cannot have their share of the "global bread" due to climate change, we as community are called to act on this injustice.
- we as today's community are called to action so that future generations may have their share of the global bread.

When the whole Earth is threatened by climate change we are called to act.

Biblical understanding of Creation and the need to move beyond human-centeredness

God created all living beings as one interrelated and interdependent reality. In this regard God's creation becomes the relational foundation for human salvation. Without healing and reconciliation with the Earth there will be no healing and reconciliation among human beings. Without salvation of the Earth itself there will be no salvation for human beings. In this sense ecological sustainability becomes the fundamental condition for the sustainability of life and peace for all living beings.

God's transformative power

It is only God's Grace and God's life-creating Love that empowers and entrusts us to be agents of God's transforming power for the wounded and broken web of life.

Christian responsibility as related to an exploitive attitude toward Earth

As Christians we are called to witness God's presence in every living organism on Earth. In doing so we have abused this relationship with God and with the Earth and have used our Christian faith to exploit the Earth and its resources, justifying our actions through anthropocentric biblical and theological interpretation. This has led to the objectification of nature, other people and the subjugation of the Earth for the benefit of a few to the detriment of many.

An Interfaith Perspective

In order to reflect inter-culturally on the Earth and our relationship to it, we should consider other faith perspectives, such as the Eastern understanding of nature as seen in the image of water: it is beneficial to all life, non-competitive, constantly flowing, flowing to the lowest space, starting from below, timeless, always seeking equilibrium, and demonstrating the principle of sufficiency with the dangerous reaction of having too much or too little. We would do well to apply this to our understanding of natural forces.

5. Post Kyoto

We re-affirm our plea for rigorous implementation of the Kyoto Protocol as an important first step toward a just and sustainable global policy regime. But these emissions are still increasing. Further radical steps are urgently required to significantly reduce greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human-induced climate change. We stress the need for rigorous and measurable implementation plans among industrialized countries which adhere to targets and timetables.

We must now also concentrate on adaptation to damages and risks caused by human induced climate change, such as compensation for the destruction of livelihoods and the violation of the right to life and a healthy environment, rehabilitation and necessary measures to prevent further damages. Saying this, we are, however, aware that the

adaptation agenda could be used to distract from the fact that the industrialized countries are far from meeting their reduction targets.

Principles to underlie these commitments:

- the principle of *equal entitlements, benefits and burdens*
- the *polluter pays* principle (historic responsibility)
- the *precautionary principle* (prospective responsibility or responsibility of care)
- '*the polluter changes*', 'the powerful intervenes to his ability'
- the principle of *priority for the poorest/weakest*
- recognition that the amount of responsibility depends on the amount of knowledge, power or causal influence and freedom any actor has
- the principle of *maximum risk reduction*, (noting that the risks for humanity do not always coincide with risks for other organisms; that risks for current generations do not coincide with risks for coming generations; that risks for one do not coincide with risks for the other; and that different kinds of risks cannot always be compared.)

Strategies:

- Advocacy for constructing, and building networks for ecologically conscientious human society
- Implementation of Adaptation and Mitigation measures
- Link climate change to water issues
- Contact targeted church bodies in the most affected regions
- Interfaith solidarity
- Lifestyle changes
- Reduction of production and consumption
- Promotion of Alternative consumer movements
- Advocacy for the Convergence and Contraction Proposal through collaboration with other actors committed to this approach. (e.g. World Social Forum; COP Side Events)

6. Recommendations to ³:

Faith communities

We believe that there are new horizons for the witness and role of the churches.

We urge the churches to call publicly for consistent action in implementing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol.

Church related relief and development agencies face the challenge of the need for adaptation. They need to develop the linkages between their emergency and disaster relief, mid-term and long-term development goals and climate change. We emphasize that water is an important field on which adaptation measures must be taken and call upon the churches for solidarity with victims of water stress.

Churches continue to have a role of education and of setting an example both among their members and in society. Models of an alternative life style are an essential part of this task.

We call upon the World Council of Churches to continue the support for these proposals by way of advocacy, stimulating reflection and organizing cooperation.

Local communities, Peoples' movements, Climate change coalitions, Environmental organizations, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

We call upon all people of goodwill to redouble their efforts to draw attention and public awareness to the urgency of these issues.

³ See also "*Moving Beyond Kyoto; with Equity, Justice and Solidarity*", a discussion document from the World Council of Churches, from the consultation "Climate and Water: Common Gifts, Related Threats", October 3-8, 2004, Zeist, The Netherlands.

Because of the complexity of the climate issue and the uncertainties that confront us, we need to find the best way to apply these principles in the public debate and the negotiations.

Governments – Local, Regional, National, International bodies

We urge the countries of the world to develop and agree on a differentiated climate policy regime to implement the Kyoto Protocol and to negotiate a new framework along the lines of Contraction and Convergence.

We urge all levels of governments, particularly in the industrialized countries, to actively participate in the implementation measures to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and to undertake a renewed emphasis on adaptation measures where the impact of climate changes are having devastating consequences.

We appeal to The United States of America and Australia who have withdrawn from the Kyoto Protocol process to re-engage themselves in the field of multilateral climate change policy-making and implementation. We regard the decision by the United States and Australia as an expression of lack of responsibility and solidarity towards the international community and creation. The position of Australia neglects in an unacceptable way the calls by its neighbours – the small Pacific Island countries - for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol as they fear eventual disappearance from the surface of the Earth as a result of the rise of sea levels.

We challenge all governments, multilateral organizations, and others to develop a Global Climate Fund, based on public collective payments for historic CO₂- debt to be used to finance adaptation.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations at the next Conference of the Parties (COP 10) in Buenos Aires, Argentina:

We call for comprehensive policies supporting adaptation programs in countries severely affected by climate change.

Being aware of the increasing risks related to water resources due to a changing climate and of growing concerns for the protection of water resources and the provision of fresh water, we emphasize the need to develop policies related to climate and water that are based upon solidarity and that provide for risk containment for the vulnerable even under present uncertainties.

Financial Institutions and Transnational Corporations:

We express our concern that the Kyoto Protocol threatens to change gradually into a totally market based instrument for minimizing economic damage to national economies and business opportunities, without realizing the real - be it small - greenhouse gas emission reductions that were the objective of the Kyoto Protocol.

We are convinced that a deeper transformation of the prevailing economic model with its focus on unqualified economic growth combined with the tendency to neglect and deny the destructive effects on people and the Earth is required to reach these goals.

Finally –

We commit ourselves to supporting and contributing to these proposals and challenges.

(**ADD NAMES ?)