



For action

STATEMENT ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

*“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it;
for he founded it on the seas and established it on the water”. (Psalm 24:1-2)*

On 4 November 2016 the Agreement adopted at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December 2015 (COP 21) came into legal effect, after a rapid ratification process in which both China and the United States of America joined. The Paris Agreement commits countries to keeping the global temperature rise to below 2° Celsius, making every effort to limit the rise to the lower threshold of 1.5°C. Under the terms of the agreement, developed countries shall support developing countries to adapt and grow in a clean and sustainable way, and to further develop ways of addressing loss and damage, including non-economic losses.

These were outcomes for which the World Council of Churches with its member churches, the ACT Alliance, Christian World Communions and many other faith-based and civil society organizations have long advocated. We acknowledge in particular the pioneering role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in advocating on climate change and the environment since 1981. The Paris Agreement was widely welcomed and celebrated by the international community and civil society. The WCC especially welcomes the fact that this agreement better reflects a justice-oriented perspective on addressing the climate crisis, offering a long-awaited sign of hope to those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

As the WCC 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013 observed, victims of climate change are the new face of the poor, the widow and the stranger that are especially loved and cared for by God. The 10th Assembly called on WCC member churches and ecumenical organizations to insist that their respective governments look beyond national interests in order to be responsible towards God’s creation and our common future, and to urge them to safeguard and promote the basic human rights of those who are threatened by the effects of climate change.

Members of the ecumenical delegation (convened jointly by WCC and ACT Alliance) attending the UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakesh, 7-18 November 2016 (COP 22), called for COP 22 to translate the hope generated by the Paris Agreement into higher ambitions and concrete actions – noting that thus far the nationally determined commitments (NDCs) fall far short of what is needed to prevent the global temperature rise exceeding 2°C, let alone the more ambitious 1.5°C target. The ecumenical delegation also called for countries to initiate a rapid transition to a low-carbon economy including by ending fossil fuel subsidies and boosting investments in renewable energies, and for wealthier industrialized countries to support poorer developing countries in this transition through finance and technology transfer.

It was also in Marrakesh, 15 years ago during the COP 7 meeting, that the WCC organized a groundbreaking Colloquium on Islamic and Christian Perspectives on Environment and Climate Change. In that gathering, Christians and Muslims affirmed that *“faith communities unite to*

make peace with the Earth.” Since then interfaith dialogue and cooperation in response to the challenge of climate change have grown, contributing to the momentum that resulted in the Paris Agreement.

The WCC executive committee, meeting in Nanjing, China, 17-23 November 2016:

Reiterates the urgent concerns of churches around the world in relation to climate change and its adverse effects on the whole of creation, especially on vulnerable poor and indigenous communities, the irreversible ecological degradation and loss of biodiversity, the increased risk of social and political tensions, conflict and displacement in a climate-constrained world, and the moral imperative of fossil fuel divestment and of investing in a low-carbon path to realizing economic, social and ecological wellbeing and sustainability for the whole creation.

Reaffirms the central importance of continuing ecumenical advocacy and action for climate justice in the framework of the pilgrimage of justice and peace, and intensified interfaith cooperation for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Acknowledges and welcomes the example offered by the government of China in its ratification of the Paris Agreement and in leading the world in investing in development of renewable energy.

Encourages the government of China to show further global leadership by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement commitments.

Calls on all states to fulfil the commitments of the Paris Agreement, through local, national and international action and cooperation, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to stop deforestation, to ensure that the global temperature rise does not exceed 2°C (striving for the lower target of 1.5°C), and to increase investment in renewable energy technologies in order to achieve the target of 100% renewable energy by 2050.

Calls especially on rich industrialized countries to scale up support (including through technology transfer) and to fulfill the commitment to mobilize \$100 billion per year for climate change mitigation and adaptation from 2020.

Expresses concern at the pledge by US President-elect Donald Trump to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, and calls on the US government to maintain and fulfil the commitments entailed in its ratification of this essential agreement.

Expresses support for the work of the WCC ecological and economic justice (EEJ) programme to develop theological and educational activities on sustainable alternatives for poverty reduction and ecological justice (SAPREJ), underlining the necessity of changed lifestyles in order to address the root causes of climate injustice.

Notes that climate change is already having adverse consequences on the very foundations of peoples' sustenance: water and food, and therefore **affirms** the work of the WCC's Ecumenical Water Network (EWN) leading the WCC to becoming a 'Blue Community' (recognizing water as a human right, saying "No" to the sale of bottled water where tap water is safe to drink, and promoting publicly financed, owned and operated water and sewerage services), and of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance (EAA) Food for Life campaign promoting food justice, the human right to food, and sustainable agro-ecological food production.