

**CANADIAN INTERFAITH  
CALL FOR LEADERSHIP AND ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

October 25, 2011

**Climate change: the spiritual roots of a crisis**

1. We, representatives of Canadian faith communities, are united in our conviction that the growing crisis of climate change needs to be met by solutions that draw upon the moral and spiritual resources of the world's religious traditions. We recognize that at its root the unprecedented human contribution to climate change is symptomatic of a spiritual deficit: excessive self-interest, destructive competition, and greed have given rise to unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Humanity's relationship with the environment has become distorted by actions that compromise the welfare of future generations of life.
2. Our faith traditions and sacred texts call upon us all – individuals, civil society, businesses, industry, and governments – to consider the spiritual dimensions of the crisis of ocean and climate change; to take stock of our collective behaviour; to transform cultures of consumerism and waste into cultures of sustainability; and to respect the balance between economic activity and environmental stewardship. The November 29-December 9, 2011, 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17) conference in South Africa has the potential to be a transition point – where we, as a global community, change how we think and act to address climate change.

**Values for a sustainable economy**

3. The world's religious traditions teach us to look beyond ourselves – individually and collectively, now and for future generations – as we confront the crisis of ocean and climate change, and to reflect on our choices and decisions. We see people as more than consumers with unlimited appetites. The foundations for a sustainable economy include the values of restraint, cooperation, and reciprocity. We believe we must work together in transforming cultures of self-interest and unprecedented consumption into cultures of justice for all.
4. All religious traditions uphold the nobility of the human spirit, calling on us to seek moderation and service to the common good. Such a vision empowers individuals to take responsibility for relationships with each other and our planet. Indeed, our everyday choices about food, transportation, clothing and entertainment are all practical expressions of what we value. At the same time, disconnections between our professed beliefs and our daily actions indicate our need for personal and collective awareness and transformation. We need to seek coherence between our beliefs and our actions, so that our lives and consumption habits reflect our relationship with the rest of humanity and the Earth itself.

**The challenge of climate justice**

5. Climate change is a planetary crisis that knows no borders. Some countries are far more adversely affected by climate change than others as they experience major changes in weather patterns. They know the impact of rising seas and erosion of lands, leading to drought or flooding. These countries are most often among the poorest and least equipped to respond.
6. Many countries are suffering from the long-term consequences of unrestrained carbon emissions that damage the atmosphere. We believe all nations need to adopt energy policies that result in actual emission reductions to a fair and safe global level. Organizations, businesses, and individuals have similar duties to reduce their emissions. For high-income nations such as Canada, justice demands that our governments shoulder a greater share of the economic burden of adaptation and

mitigation – first and foremost, because of access to greater means, but also because of an historic role in contributing to its causes. We have a moral imperative to act.

### **A call for leadership and action**

7. We call for leadership to put the long-term interest of humanity and the planet ahead of short-term economic and national concerns. The teachings of our faiths tell us that the best interests of one group or nation are served by pursuing the best interests of all. There is one human family and one Earth that is our common homeland. Climate change is a global crisis and requires global solutions that put the well-being of all people first – especially the most vulnerable. Furthermore, our environment is the natural source of our wealth and the home of millions of species for which we are planetary stewards. How long can we barter this priceless inheritance for the promise of growing economic returns?
8. In our neighbourhoods and communities, in businesses and organizations, we need to change wasteful patterns of production and consumption. This calls for a cultural transformation that brings the values of sustainability to the forefront of public consciousness – and into more responsible practices. We cannot wait for others to act but instead must lead by example. Religious organizations, public institutions, and businesses all have important roles to play in promoting ethical consumption and more sustainable lifestyles and practices in their everyday operations.
9. We speak respectfully to our political leaders, who have been entrusted with authority by Canadians. We ask that you act with due regard for the values of both religion and science, looking objectively on the problems confronting our planet. Climate science points to a future of greater instability and unpredictability, problems that can be addressed by action today. We stand ready to work alongside you to promote a future of security, prosperity, and justice – for humankind, and the whole of creation.
10. As you carry out your responsibilities at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17), we urge you to honour the values we have described and adopt the following policy goals:
  - in the spirit of global solidarity, take collective action by signing and implementing a binding international agreement replacing the Kyoto Protocol that commits nations to reduce carbon emissions and set fair and clear targets to ensure that global average temperatures stay below a 2° Celsius increase from pre-industrial levels;
  - demonstrate national responsibility by committing to national carbon emission targets and a national renewable energy policy designed to achieve sustainability; and
  - implement climate justice, by playing a constructive role in the design of the Green Climate Fund<sup>1</sup> under United Nations governance, and by contributing public funds to assist the poorest and most affected countries to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

We believe these to be practical and critical measures necessary to secure the well-being of the planet for future generations of life.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Green Climate Fund** is being established by the United Nations to support projects, programme, policies and other activities in developing countries related to climate mitigation and adaptation.

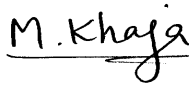
## Leaders of faith communities



The Most Reverend Fred Hiltz  
Archbishop and Primate  
The Anglican Church of Canada

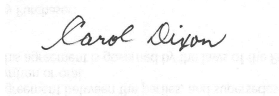


His Grace Bishop Bagrat Galstania  
Primate  
Armenian Holy Apostolic Church, Canadian Diocese



Mobeen Khaja, O.Ont.  
President  
Association of Progressive Muslims of Canada

Imam Dr. Hamid Slimi  
Chairman of the Canadian Council of Imams  
President of Faith of Life Network



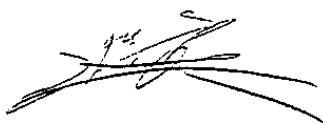
Carol Dixon  
Presiding Clerk  
Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)



Reverend Richard E Hamilton  
Regional Minister  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada



The Rev. Bruce Adema  
Director of Canadian Ministries  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

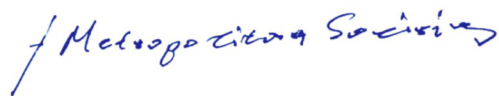


L.K. (Rev. Fr.) Messale Engeda  
Head Priest and Administrator of  
The Ethiopian Orthodox Church of Canada



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Pandit Roopnauth Sharma  
President  
Federation of Hindu Temples of Canada



Metropolitan Archbishop Sotirios of Toronto  
Head of the Greek Orthodox Church in Canada

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Geevarghese Mar Theodosius  
The Diocesan Bishop of North America and Europe  
Mar Thoma Syrian Church



Rev. Willard Metzger  
General Secretary  
Mennonite Church Canada



Karen McKee  
Secretary  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada



Bishop Sylvester Bigaj  
Polish National Catholic Church of Canada



The Rev. Dr. H.D. Rick Horst  
Moderator of the 137<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada



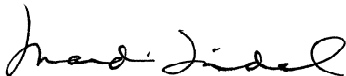
The Rev. John Kapteyn  
Executive Secretary  
Regional Synod of Canada, Reformed Church in America



Brian Peddle  
Commissioner  
Territorial Commander  
The Salvation Army  
Canada and Bermuda Territory

David Courchene (Nii Gaani Aki Inini - Leading Earth Man)  
Anishnabe Nation, Eagle Clan  
Founder, Turtle Lodge  
Sagkeeng First Nation, Manitoba  
[www.theturtlelodge.org](http://www.theturtlelodge.org)

His Eminence Metropolitan Yuriy (Kalistchuk)  
Primate  
The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada



Mardi Tindal  
Moderator  
The United Church of Canada

## Leaders of faith-based organizations



Co-Directors

Jonathan Schmidt/Alice Schuda

Canadian Churches Forum for Global Ministries



Mark Huyser-Wierenga

Chair

Citizens for Public Justice



The Rev. Dr. William Phipps

Chair

Faith and the Common Good



Michael Skaljin

Executive Director

Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC)



Mary Corkery

Executive Director

KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives