

African Church Leaders' Statement On climate change and water

We Church Leaders representing National Christian Councils and Churches from the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in Southern Africa [FOCCISA] and the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great lakes and Horn of Africa [FECCLAHA] under the auspices of AACC met from 3rd – 5th June 2008 to consult on the subject of climate change and water at the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Ecumenical Centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

1. **Affirm** the reality and urgency of climate change and the adverse negative impact it has on entire humanity and particularly on poor and vulnerable communities in Africa. The current climate crisis is primarily spiritual and ethical with serious political, economic and justice implications. As human beings we have failed to appreciate the intrinsic worth of ourselves, other humans, other species and future generations. We have failed to acknowledge the fact that the earth sustains life because of the harmonious balance of the elements and all the creatures within it. Our pursuit of "happiness and high quality of life" need not endanger other peoples, nations, communities, species and future generations that are also entitled to survival and happiness. The earth has enough resources to satisfy everyone's need, but not enough resources for anyone's greed.
2. **Believe** that ecological sustenance can be assured only through the principle of being mindful of the welfare of others while we mind our own. That our survival is inextricably woven with that of others. And that in the long term, we cannot survive while others perish. (Do not wish for others that which you do not wish for yourself, nor promise that which you do not fulfil. Matthew 7:12).
3. **Believe** in line with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, that the costs of climate change mitigation and adaptation must be borne based on historical and actual responsibility and the ability to pay. In other words, there is an obligation of the industrialised countries to pay their carbon debts but more urgently to stop the emission of greenhouse gases.
4. **Recognize** that climate change has primarily been accelerated by emissions of green house gases due to human activities. That these global emissions are not only historical but also actual current emissions by industrialised countries thus global warming. The negative consequences of which are felt largely in the global South.

And that climate change affects the availability of domestic and agricultural water and food security.

5. **Appreciate** the role of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in responding to the global environmental crisis as it provides a common negotiation platform for all nations and offers access for participation of non-governmental actors.
6. **Reason** that the current environmental and development crisis cannot be overcome through voluntary action only. That legally binding commitments are critical for the different issues of mitigation, adaptation, finance, development of technology and afforestation. It is therefore our view that the next eighteen months preceding the UNFCCC climate conference in Copenhagen in December 2009 (COP 15) are crucial to improving and strengthening the existing mechanisms.
7. **Recognize** that the Kyoto Protocol as an important step towards ensuring that industrialised countries commit themselves to legally binding emission reductions to 1990 levels. However, its implementation and the political commitment of the industrialised nations is absent. Some countries, notably USA and New Zealand have not even ratified the protocol, while most of the other countries with mitigation commitments are lagging too far behind their reduction targets.

We therefore urge African governments to propose and support principles based on justice, equity and responsibility in the climate change debate. These will go along way to secure fair and just commitments for the post 2012 period.

Unless decisive action is taken immediately, climate chaos will lead to increased human suffering and social upheaval condemning millions of people to hunger, disease, misery and death. A third of the African population has already fallen prey to droughts, floods and resource-based conflicts resulting from global warming.

We urgently therefore:

- A. **call** on Governments and industry in the industrialised countries, especially in the North, to:
 - Implement significant and immediate reduction measures of at least 80% on 1990 levels and at the same time secure the right of all people to reach a dignified level of human development.
 - Rapidly execute emission reductions that they accepted in the Kyoto Protocol and to adopt new, more effective and legally binding post 2012 emission reduction obligations.

- Support adaptation strategies in the South through adequate financial and technological support as a way of owning up to their responsibility for the climate crisis.
 - Avail new mechanisms for channelling significant sums of financial, technological and other support, in addition to the commitment made (and mostly not fulfilled) by developed countries to provide 0.7% of their Gross Domestic Product for Official Development Assistance (ODA).
 - Promote and implement low carbon strategies for sustainable human development.
 - Compensate developing countries for the damage already done and the lost opportunities based on the polluter-pays-principle.
- B. **Observe** that the contribution of African countries to the total global emissions is very low and **call** upon the African governments to:
- Affirm political will to address climate change and to allocate adequate public resources to education for increased resilience and adaptation initiatives.
 - Recognize the role of the churches and other civil societies including other faith communities in order to adequately respond to and support local efforts to adapt to the adverse consequences of climate change – particularly at community levels.
 - Define appropriate policy frameworks to support the innovation, contextualisation and development of technologies for sustainable industrial development in their respective countries, giving priority to the promotion of indigenous inventions and innovations.
- C. **Appreciate** the efforts of churches and faith-based organisations in advocating for the rights of the poor and vulnerable communities in the continent and challenge them to:
- Recognise the reality of climate change and the urgency to create awareness, mobilise and promote their communities to engage in activities towards effective and sustainable adaptation to the crisis.
 - Stand in solidarity with communities that are currently suffering from the negative impacts of climate change and whose livelihoods have been compromised through, encouraging diversified eating habits, home grown long term agriculture & food security programs
 - Review curricula of theological institutions and develop in-service training for clergy and lay leaders to integrate the theme of climate change at all levels.
 - Engage faith communities in the North to demand binding commitments from their governments to pay their carbon debt, reduce emission of green house gases and support adaptation initiatives in the South.

- Continue to influence the UNFCCC negotiation process through joint lobbying and advocacy activities using equity-based frameworks like the “Greenhouse Development Rights” and other human rights based approaches.
- To collaborate with their partners in the North to establish eco-congregations that will also offer options for checking consumerism through behaviour change thus reduce carbon emissions.
- Engage African governments to develop appropriate legislation and policy framework towards precaution, mitigation and adaptation against climate change

We, church leaders present in this consultation, hereby commit ourselves to work, engage and challenge our constituents, African governments, partners, governments of industrialised countries, the African Union and United nations and other stakeholders in ensuring that climate change and its adverse effects as already experienced or projected is reversed.