



A Call to Action in Solidarity
with Those Most Affected by Climate Change

Justice, Peace and Creation

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*Appeal to Governments and People
on the Occasion of the
8th Session of the Conference of Parties (COP8) to the
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
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**Statement prepared by
Ecumenical Development and Relief Agencies in collaboration with
The World Council of Churches Climate Change Programme**

The overwhelming world scientific consensus is that human activities are causing observable changes to the global climate which are already having a significant environmental, social and economic impact, and are likely to have increasingly serious disruptive consequences as the century progresses.

There is growing evidence that weather extremes have become more frequent. Floods and droughts intensify. The mean global sea levels is rising. In the coming decades, according to the scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, even a medium scenario predicts that changing climate conditions may turn 150 million people into refugees. A recent study, conducted by a renowned re-insurance company, speaks of an annual damage of up to US\$ 300 billion. This pattern of climate events is consistent with what scientists predict would happen as a result of human induced global warming.

For us these prospects are cause for deep concern. We represent people and churches in poor communities who will be especially hit by the adverse effects of climate change, and also concerned people and churches in materially rich countries who wish to bear witness that global actions to combat climate change are too slow. In addition we speak for the churches' international network of relief and development agencies, which has more than 50 years of experience in working in response to natural disasters and in addressing issues of poverty and injustice. We are committed both to alleviating suffering when catastrophes occur, and also to participating in efforts to promote economic justice. Over the years we have been engaged in numerous development projects, but now relief and development agencies are faced with a new situation. Firstly, the increasing need for emergency aid may considerably exceed the moral and economic capacities available in society to respond. Secondly, we will see increasingly situations where many years of careful and engaged development are put at risk, or even wiped out, by sudden extreme weather hazards.

The consequences of climate change further accentuate the deep injustices, which exist between industrialised, and developing countries. Developing countries, where the majority of the world's population live, are more likely to be hit by weather anomalies, and lack the means to protect themselves against the impacts brought about by climate change. At the same time, the poor in these countries make only marginal contributions to global greenhouse gas emissions, while rich countries continue to be the prime producers. Moreover, there is a lack of commitment by leaders in the most powerful countries to take the necessary political and financial responsibility.

The overwhelming magnitude of the task can easily lead to indifference or to despair. Instead, there is an urgent need for action. Every effort must be undertaken to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.

The Kyoto Protocol is a first step in the global effort to combat climate change. The legal character and the compliance system are new elements in global institutional life. We call on all parties that have not yet ratified the Kyoto Protocol to do so, in particular the USA.

However, in the light of the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2000), we must be under no illusions. The impact of the Kyoto targets will only be very small. The Protocol needs to be followed up by much stronger efforts.

The Kyoto Protocol must be indeed ratified, but at the same we urge governments to proceed without delay with *a new round of negotiations* whose targets must be determined in the light of the long-term perspective. Two basic requirements must be met:

1. Stabilisation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere at a level in accordance with the overall objective of the Climate Change Convention.
2. A fair distribution of rights and obligations, by establishing the concept of *per capita* emission rights for all countries, as proposed in the 'Contraction and Convergence' scheme.

In order to achieve these requirements, strong actions must be taken in order to make possible the necessary transformation from fossil fuel to renewable energy. Developed countries must put a high priority to setting up steering mechanisms and incentives that favour renewable energy and non-fossil fuel based transportation. In developing countries, investment and development aid need to be directed towards ways of producing and using energy and systems of transport that are environmentally and socially sustainable.

The benefits of all these efforts to reduce the causes of global warming will take a long time to show their effects. In the meantime the climate will continue to warm because emissions are still rising and greenhouse gases have a long life. Weather anomalies are therefore projected to increase in the coming years and decades. Consequently there is an urgent need for increased mutual assistance and help. *To maintain a minimum of justice in our world, a new sense of solidarity is called for.*

We appeal therefore to all people not only to persevere in the struggle for a more just and peaceful world, but to contribute to this goal in new ways. Only on the basis of such a new commitment will relief and development agencies be able to carry out their task in the future.

This task requires a response from each one of us. Through our own life styles we can contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Through our witness we can encourage governments to advance on the road towards responsible reduction targets.

The statement is supported by the following Agencies associated to the World Council of Churches:

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Christian World Service, New Zealand
Church of Sweden Aid, Sweden
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