

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES STATEMENT

High - Level Segment

7th Session of the Conference of the Parties - COP7 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Marrakech - Morocco

November 8, 2001

Religion has a significant role to play in promoting care for the Earth. We share a common conviction as to the seriousness of the climate change problem and the need for co-operation among all religions, scientists and states; among all the communities and peoples of the world, regardless of creed, language or ethnic identity.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has participated in the Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee sessions on climate change under the auspices of the United Nations since 1989.

On every occasion of the annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs) since 1995, the WCC has sponsored ecumenical and interfaith events on climate change. In 1997 when the UN Climate Change Conference (COP3) was held in Kyoto, Japan, the WCC co-sponsored inter-religious events with Buddhist, Shinto and Christian organisations.

The UN Climate Change Conference in 2001 (COP7) is the first negotiating session to be held in a country whose majority population is Islamic. This provided an opportunity at a Colloquium sponsored by the WCC for dialogue among members of the Islamic and Christian faith communities on how religion can play an integral role in helping to address the threat of climate change. This Colloquium was a witness of Muslims and Christians sharing ideas and bread together.

Religions have a significant role to play in modern societies establishing a language of the heart and of the spirit, which will surely have a great influence on the climate change negotiations. We also hope to have the language of the heart and of the spirit used as an alternative to war. This is a time when it is particularly important to build bridges for dialogue between cultures and religions.

We heard and continue to hear a strong support from COP7 delegates for such inter-faith dialogue in the current global context.

We learn that from the Islamic point of view, protecting the environment and avoiding climate change that damages life, requires:

- Deepening awareness of the elements affecting life on our planet and the laws established by God to preserve the continuity of the gift of life
- Stopping the race of manufacturing and consumption that does not respect either religion or spirituality

- Strengthening faith and the religious and ethical background that act on the behaviour of human beings, as all Holy Religions prohibit causing damage or harm to others in any manner

From the Christian perspective, we learn that:

- Humans are called to care for and keep this garden we call planet Earth
- It is time to move to a conception addressing climate change as a matter of ethical responsibility, as a matter of justice and as a matter of love: love for our neighbour, love for nature, love for our environment
- We are living a time when ethics, justice and love need to become world-wide, not only for us but also for the generations to come

Equity and justice are as well main themes to be taken into account in the international negotiations on climate change. Justice and equity in the access to the Earth's resources. Justice and equity in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Justice and equity as the basal stones in the search of alternative models for sustainable communities.

The rediscovery of Indigenous Peoples' knowledge is another significant source of wisdom for today's problems. Their wisdom and respect for nature long pre-date the ecological message we know today.

The WCC is supportive of the Indigenous Peoples communities' desire to attain special status as a "Working Group on Indigenous Peoples" within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In the present times, religions can bring and share the so much needed message of Hope. Faiths must help the global society to appreciate the wonder and the sacredness of life. We can make the world a hospitable place to live for all, by avoiding the social injustices of the impacts of climate change.

In summary we declare that there is an important and shared role for all faith communities in protecting the Earth's atmosphere, in preserving nature, and above all in maintaining life in all its forms, as life is the profoundly sacred treasure that was given to us as a gift.

Members of the World Council of Churches delegation to COP7:

Lic. Elias C. ABRAMIDES – Argentina
 Ms. Nafisa GOGA D'SOUZA - India
 Dr. David G. HALLMAN - Canada
 Ms. Mirjam SCHUBERT - Germany (WCC journalist)
 Ms. Marijke VAN DUIN - The Netherlands