

Calling Christians to Climate Action

During COP23

6 – 17 November 2017

The Queensland Churches Environmental Network (QCEN) calls on Christians in Queensland and around Australia and the world to take bold action during the meeting of the Conference of Parties 23 (COP23) being held in Bonn, Germany.

At COP21 in Paris, world leaders made promises to cut carbon emissions to stop global temperatures from rising to dangerous levels. While leaders gather for COP23 in Germany, they need to hear a clear message that we will hold them accountable for their promises – and that especially includes our leaders here in Australia!

God has entrusted us with responsibility for caring for our common home, this one precious earth we all share. Scientists have pointed to many signs that the planet is in serious trouble because of climate change. Many of us have heard the cries of the earth and the peoples whose lands are already under serious threat from rising sea levels. For the sake of the earth and all those peoples living in low-lying countries in the Pacific, Asia and around the world, let's take action and send a clear message to our leaders here in Australia and around the world that we want them to take action that keeps the global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees.

AND THAT DEFINITELY MEANS NO NEW FOSSIL FUEL DEVELOPMENTS!

The Churches Call for Climate Action

Statement on Climate Justice from the World Council of Churches (November 2016)

“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.

JOINT MESSAGE

of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew on the World Day of Prayer for Creation

The story of creation presents us with a panoramic view of the world. Scripture reveals that, “in the beginning”, God intended humanity to cooperate in the preservation and protection of the natural environment. At first, as we read in Genesis, “no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up – for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground” (2:5). The earth was entrusted to us as a sublime gift and legacy, for which all of us share responsibility until, “in the end”, all things in heaven and on earth will be restored in Christ (cf. Eph 1:10). Our human dignity and welfare are deeply connected to our care for the whole of creation.

“We urgently appeal to those in positions of social and economic, as well as political and cultural, responsibility to hear the cry of the earth and to attend to the needs of the marginalized, but above all to respond to the plea of millions and support the consensus of the world for the healing of our wounded creation.”

However, “in the meantime”, the history of the world presents a very different context. It reveals a morally decaying scenario where our attitude and behaviour towards creation obscures our calling as God’s co-operators. Our propensity to interrupt the world’s delicate and balanced ecosystems, our insatiable desire to manipulate and control the planet’s limited resources, and our greed for limitless profit in markets – all these have alienated us from the original purpose of creation. We no longer respect nature as a shared gift; instead, we regard it as a private possession. We no longer associate with nature in order to sustain it; instead, we lord over it to support our own constructs.

The consequences of this alternative worldview are tragic and lasting. The human environment and the natural environment are deteriorating together, and this deterioration of the planet weighs upon the most vulnerable of its people. The impact of climate change affects, first and foremost, those who live in poverty in every corner of the globe. Our obligation to use the earth’s goods responsibly implies the recognition of and respect for all people and all living creatures. The urgent call and challenge to care for creation are an invitation for all of humanity to work towards sustainable and integral development.

Therefore, united by the same concern for God’s creation and acknowledging the earth as a shared good, we fervently invite all people of goodwill to dedicate a time of prayer for the environment on 1 September. On this occasion, we wish to offer thanks to the loving Creator for the noble gift of creation and to pledge commitment to its care and preservation for the sake of future generations. After all, we know that we labour in vain if the Lord is not by our side (cf. Ps 126-127), if prayer is not at the centre of our reflection and celebration. Indeed, an objective of our prayer is to change the way we perceive the world in order to change the

way we relate to the world. The goal of our promise is to be courageous in embracing greater simplicity and solidarity in our lives.

We urgently appeal to those in positions of social and economic, as well as political and cultural, responsibility to hear the cry of the earth and to attend to the needs of the marginalized, but above all to respond to the plea of millions and support the consensus of the world for the healing of our wounded creation. We are convinced that there can be no sincere and enduring resolution to the challenge of the ecological crisis and climate change unless the response is concerted and collective, unless the responsibility is shared and accountable, unless we give priority to solidarity and service.

From the Vatican and from the Phanar, 1 September 2017
Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew



PACIFIC CHURCH LEADERS MEETING STATEMENT FOR COP 23 AND BEYOND (August 2017)

'For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also'
- James 2:26

On the occasion of the Church Leaders Meeting representing Anglican Church of Melanesia, Anglican Diocese of Polynesia, Catholic Bishops in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, Churches of Christ Vanuatu, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa, Cook Islands Christian Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu, Ekalesia Kerisiano Niue, Evangelical Church in New Caledonia and the Loyalty Islands, Fiji Council of Churches, United Church in Papua New Guinea, Papua New Guinea Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu, Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Samoa National Council of Churches, Etaretia Porotetani Maohi, Methodist Church in Fiji and Rotuma, St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Kiribati Uniting Church, Nauru Congregational Church and the Methodist

Church of Samoa on Rethinking the Ecumenical movement in the Pacific, the Pacific Church Leaders have issued the following statement in support of the Pacific through Fiji taking over the presidency of the COP 23 and as a build up to the pre and post 23rd Conference of Parties (COP 23).

We exercise our prophetic voice as churches and believers of the faith to amplify the cries of our people and Moana who are directly or indirectly affected by Climate Change and encourage the spirit of stewardship among ourselves as custodians of God's creation.

In 2015, the Paris Agreement marked the first time that governments have agreed legally binding limits to global temperature rise and aimed to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty. Emphasizing the urgency of processing this legally binding agreement, we call on our governments and international institutions to:

- Increase pledges to reduce emissions in line with keeping the global temperature rise to 1.5oC above pre-industrial level;
- Advance the National Determined Contribution and long term strategies in line with the 1.5oC limit of global average temperature increase;
- Clearly outline and implement National Adaptation Plans in full accordance with the Paris Agreements and recognizing the needs and the basic human rights of the most vulnerable groups;
- Insist on the rapid phase out of all fossil fuel subsidies and transition from fossil fuels to 100% renewable energy by 2050;
- Undertake immediate measures to close the remaining gaps between international, national and in particularly local level action, hindering community based climate adaptation and risk management approaches fostering resilience and overcoming poverty;
- Provide means of implementation required, to shift relevant financial flows towards transformational climate resilient zero carbon pathways, and to fulfil the commitment of developed countries to provide at least 100billion USD annually to developing countries for climate mitigation, adaptation, and resettlement of populations, risk reduction, risk transfer and climate induced loss and damage.

We recognize the existing local knowledge and community strengths as an important factor to consider in building a more sustainable and climate resilient Pacific. We therefore call for full consultation and due participation of our communities in national climate adaptation planning processes from inception, to fully take into account their potential, and to create a new culture of proactive rather than reactive risk management, improving efficiency, protecting lives and livelihoods, and reducing economic and non-economic losses and damages. The engagements of members of community includes the participation of all sub-groups of the community namely the women, youth, children, people living with disability and other minority groups.

A Prayer for Our Earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with

awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light. We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.

Pope Francis, Laudato Si, n 246.



What Can You Do during COP23?

- ✓ Pray each day for the earth and its vulnerable peoples and for world leaders gathered at COP23.
- ✓ Pacific representatives are going to Bonn and have asked you to take a selfie and upload it so they can show how many people around the world want to hold world leaders accountable for their promises made in Paris at COP21. Find the details at:
<https://greenpeace.good.do/p-i-represent/sweet-talk-selfie/>
- ✓ Sign the Declaration prepared by the Pacific Climate Warriors:
www.haveyoursei.org/
- ✓ Consider a carbon fast during the COP23 as a sign of your solidarity with the earth and vulnerable peoples. Reduce your use of electricity, gas and petrol over the 2 weeks and consider making this a permanent commitment to reduce your carbon footprint.
- ✓ You may also wish to enter into a period of fasting from food, i.e., reducing your food intake, as a spiritual practice during the COP23.
- ✓ Send e-mails, write letters, make phone calls and arrange appointments with your local Federal MP and your State Senators calling on them to take effective action to keep the global temperature rise to below 1.5 degrees. Urge them to make a commitment to end the opening of new fossil fuel developments including the Carmichael mine in the Galilee Basin (Adani). Also contact the office of the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and the Foreign Affairs Minister, Julie Bishop. For contact details, see:
www.aph.gov.au/
- ✓ Contact your local Queensland State MP and all your electorate's candidates for the 2017 Queensland election urging them to rule out the Adani coal mine project and all new fossil fuel developments. Remind them that the Queensland Government has the power to veto any decision by the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) to give almost \$1 billion to the Adani project for the construction of a rail line from the mine to the coast. Urge them to make a commitment to developing renewable energy projects and other sustainable, viable economic initiatives which will provide employment and economic opportunities for Queenslanders. You will find MP contact lists at:
www.parliament.qld.gov.au/
- ✓ You will find candidate lists on the Electoral Commission's web site:
www.ecq.qld.gov.au/
- ✓ Get involved in the actions of local Stop Adani Coalition groups:
www.stopadani.org.au/

This resource is prepared by the Queensland Churches Environmental Network's Climate Action Group.