

*Though most Christians do not realise it, the churches are very active in lobbying on behalf of creation at major environmental and economic conferences.*

**WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES STATEMENT  
TO THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE UN CLIMATE CHANGE  
CONFERENCE (COP11 and COP/MOP1)**

Montréal, Canada, 9 December, 2005

Mr President, Distinguished Delegates, Observers,

**We would like to light a candle – the light being a symbol of joy and hope - because first of all we want to celebrate the coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol, this being the first Meeting of the Parties.** We also want to celebrate the dedication that so many people and so many countries have shown over these days to make the Kyoto Protocol and the UN Convention on Climate Change a success, by agreeing on the Marrakech Accords and on a working plan on adaptation.

**We would like to light a candle because we are thankful for the gift of life - ever so precious and ever so delicate - which for us and other people of faith is a gracious and sacred gift.** We are thankful also for the gift of the atmosphere as a precondition of life to all living beings. More specifically we want to remind us all that we owe a debt to poor and marginalised communities who, by emitting low levels of CO<sub>2</sub>, limit the climate impact that would occur if all people were to live the lives of wealthy communities, both in the South and the North. Recognising this debt must lead us to a response of justice. Therefore we plead for a substantial Climate Fund in which people from wealthy communities pay for all their excess emissions above the long term sustainable and per capita equal level, to be used for adaptation and sustainable development in poor communities.

**We would like to light a candle because we want to remind us all of the pain and disaster that is already suffered in various regions of the Earth due to climate change; disaster to people – even requiring forced migration - disaster to nature, to creation.** Disaster inevitably will occur to future generations due to the already high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere. Here we preferentially mention people living in vulnerable living conditions like many Pacific islands, the Arctic and so many more. Also we specifically mention women and children in developing countries who often are first affected by the lack of water, food, fuel and sustainable livelihoods. This brings us to emphasizing once more the need of substantial and immediate adaptation efforts as a sign of solidarity and a consequence of the responsibility people mainly in the North bear for the ongoing climate change.

**We would like to light a candle because by burning down the candle we want to remind us all that time is running out. We pray that an agreement may be reached for negotiating equitable and sustainable targets for post-2012.** To respect our pledge to prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system – which according to a broad consensus would amount to limiting temperature rise to 2 degrees C – we are at a critical moment now. We have used little over one century to come to this situation of crisis. Radical changes have to take place in order to make the transition to sustainability within the current century. This is the moment to decide on these changes. Let us acknowledge that the use of the atmosphere - being a Global

Commons – has to be shared equally and justly. Let us conclude therefore that we cannot let political power, the market and technology-based economic competition decide on how the use of the atmosphere will be distributed. Therefore we once more point to the Contraction and Convergence Model as a valuable starting point for deliberations and negotiations.

**We would like to light a non-fossil fuel candle as an appeal to the non-fossil fuel society that we envisage.** To that end, we welcome the tremendous possibilities of science and technology that can be and should be shared graciously, as a crucial contribution to sustainable development all over the world. This can lead to sustainable and just societies that indeed have a significant improvement in the quality of life over what currently exists.

**We would like to light a candle as an acknowledgement that what we suffer from is not simply a technological, economic or ecological crisis, but a spiritual crisis.** Our situation is the result of valuing the certainty of political power over the certainty of community, solidarity and justice being done to each other; of valuing the certainty of individual control of material wealth over the certainty of enjoying the gifts of nature and friendship. Therefore we ask for guidance to us all in making a transformation to a consciousness of community and enjoying the bounty of nature.

**We would like to light a candle because we remember that people have always gathered around the light as a symbol of safety, warmth, community and hope.** As representatives of a faith community from all the continents of our world, we ask you and dedicate ourselves to continue to build a community of justice, equity, solidarity and sustainability, as so many of you and us here present have tried to do in these days.

**As representatives of a global community - young and old, female and male, black and white, south and north - we invite you to join us in affirming a “Spiritual Declaration on Climate Change” that was issued by almost 2,000 faith community participants at an inter-religious event on Sunday December 4th here in Montreal:**

#### **A SPIRITUAL DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

We hear the call of the Earth.

We believe that caring for life on Earth is a spiritual commitment.

- People and other species have the right to life unthreatened by human greed and destructiveness.
- Pollution, particularly from the energy-intensive wealthy industrialised countries, is warming the atmosphere. A warmer atmosphere is leading to major climate changes. The poor and vulnerable in the world and future generations will suffer the most.
- We commit ourselves to help reduce the threat of climate change through actions in our own lives, pressure on governments and industries and standing in solidarity with those most affected by climate change.
- We pray for spiritual support in responding to the call of the Earth.

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