



**Faith and Feasability
Responsibly searching
for a “new heaven and a new earth”**

Statement from the World Council of Churches
to the High-Level Ministerial Segment of the
14th Session of the Conference of the Parties – COP14 to the UNFCCC
4th Session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol – CMP4

Poznań - Poland
Friday, December 12, 2008

Mr. President,
Distinguished Participants in this United Nations Climate Conference,

Two weeks ago 29 committed leaders from all major faith traditions convened at the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Summit and signed a strong manifesto, which is brought to you as an appendix to this statement. People of different faiths give their support to change governed by justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love.

In December 2007 during our message to the plenary of the High Level Segment of COP13-CMP3 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, the WCC affirmed that as Faith Communities we are convinced a change of paradigm is needed, if the world is to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change. In February this year, the WCC Central Committee in its *Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change* called for “a profound change in the relationship towards nature, economic policies, consumption, production and technological patterns”. It was added that societies must shift to a new vision where the operative principles are justice, equity, solidarity, human development and care for the environment. And it claimed to the world: “*This far and no further: act fast and act now!*”

The process towards Copenhagen, started in Bali, must strengthen the commitment of the international community to go beyond the Kyoto Protocol in order to effectively address the threat of global warming.

The journey from COP1 in Berlin in 1995 has been a long one. The WCC has been present in all the UN Climate Conferences around the world, expressing solidarity with victims of climate change, a.o. in African countries and Pacific Island States, who already suffer from increasing droughts, floods and the sea-level rise. We have supported them in their demand for climate justice for all.

Meeting this year in Poznań, we feel the urgency as we think we have only a small ‘window of opportunity’ of less than 10 years in which to stabilize atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases, limit atmospheric temperature rise to 2°C *and* at the same time prevent the most detrimental impacts on nature, societies, economies and development opportunities. But as a Christian fellowship of churches we also do this with faith, because we know the needed changes are possible and believe in the promise of “...*a new heaven and a new earth...*” (Book of Revelation, 21: 1) where justice, equity, solidarity, peace and love will prevail. As churches, faith is the reason for us to act. We share this inspiration with other faith traditions. Thus the

feasibility of adequately addressing climate change depends very much on the political will and consequent decisions this COP will make.

It is our conviction that what is needed for getting negotiations moving and people changing is a convincing argument on the *feasibility* of climate proof, sustainable societies and lifestyles that will enhance life with dignity. Faith communities have an important role to play.

First and foremost, ambitious politics are needed. As a fellowship of churches, representing more than 500 million people in the world we urge State Parties and the international community to renew, strengthen and deepen their commitment regarding climate change and global warming.

Once again, we affirm the basic thrust of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human induced climate change. We renew our call for a prompt implementation of the obligations of the Kyoto Protocol as this will give a convincing signal that climate change and responsibilities are taken seriously.

But emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are still increasing, which continues to be a matter of alarm. We call governments to take much more radical steps in terms to cut emissions. The signatories of the Uppsala manifesto call for cuts in developed countries by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and 90 per cent by 2050 against 1990 levels. At the same time ambitious quantitative and short term goals for the use of renewable energy are needed.

The issue of adaptation still has been given insufficient attention. This may be attributed to the unwillingness of industrialized countries to accept real responsibility for climate change and to the lack of clarity about the concept of adaptation. Adaptation must be firmly based on human rights. It must include efforts to reduce people's vulnerability and strengthen their strategies to cope with a changing climate and manage and strengthen the local ecosystems that people, to greater or lesser degrees, depend on for their livelihoods. Comprehensive policies and adequate funding for adaptation programmes in countries severely affected by climate change have to be implemented.

A much more principle-based approach is crucial for reaching an effective and equitable global climate policy regime built on the ethical imperatives of justice, equity and solidarity. . On a more practical level this pleads for responsibility principles like 'the polluter pays', the precautionary principle, maximum risk reduction and "the polluter changes". Justice and solidarity are interpreted in terms of priority and support for the poorest and those most affected by climate change and the right to sustainable development for those living in poverty and marginalization.

Mr President, distinguished participants,

Once more, as a fellowship of churches, we appeal to you to continue the process in order to reach the unambiguous solution we are expecting. Despite the threat of climate change with a sense of wonder we look at life on planet Earth. It is a miracle and a gift! We all share the responsibility of seeing conscious caretakers of this home of ours. We shall be with you and have you in our prayers, as you already are in the prayers of millions of people around the world.

Act here and act now!

Thank you.

World Council of Churches web-site: www.oikoumene.org