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CSC Briefing on Climate Change

CLIMATE CHANGE: A SUMMARY

Climate change is one of the greatest environmental, social and economical threats facing the planet. Most of the warming that has occurred over the last 50 years is very likely to have been caused by human activities. In its Fourth Assessment Report, published in February 2007, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) projects that, without further action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the global average surface temperature is likely to rise by 1.8-4.0°C this century. Even the lower end of this range would take the temperature increase since pre-industrial times above 2°C, the threshold beyond which irreversible and possibly catastrophic changes become far more likely.

The projected global warming is likely to trigger serious consequences for humanity and other life forms. This includes 18-59 cm rise in sea levels which will endanger coastal areas and small islands, and a greater frequency and severity of extreme weather events. Climate change also raises issues of human rights, human health and global equity. It is also increasingly seen as a security question. During the German EU Presidency in the spring 2007, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier argued for “a European diplomacy to face the foreign and security policy challenges presented by climate change”¹. In addition, climate change risks causing major disruption to economic

¹ EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, will present the Spring European Council a report on the impact of climate change on international security. It will serve as a basis for proposing concrete policy measures at the EU level. For more information concerning the security aspects of climate change, consult the briefing paper “Climate change - not just a green issue”, which was published by the Church of England in August 2008.

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/international/climatechange/climatechange.pdf>.

and social activity. According to the Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change² one percent of global gross domestic product (GDP) per annum is required to be invested in order to avoid the worst effects of climate change. Failure to do so could risk global GDP being up to twenty percent lower than it otherwise might be.

Human activities that contribute to climate change include in particular the burning of fossil fuels, agriculture and land-use changes like deforestation. These cause emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the main gas responsible for climate change, as well as of other 'greenhouse' gases.

EU ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The European Union (EU) endeavours to be at the forefront of international efforts to combat climate change and has played a key role in the development of the two major treaties addressing the issue, the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol³, agreed in 1997. In March 2000 the Commission launched the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP). The ECCP led to the adoption of a wide range of policies and measures. Among these is the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), which is considered the cornerstone of EU efforts to reduce emissions in a cost effective manner. Unfortunately, until now the programme has failed to deliver achievements due to the lack of ambition of the EU Member States and the dominance of economic considerations. The lack of proven commitment is particularly worrying, as no other collective is better placed and duty bound as the EU to manifest good practice in fighting climate change.

Since Spring 2007 the question of climate change and its linkage with energy policy has been at the top of the EU's political agenda. This coincides with the publication of several highly authoritative reports (e.g. the Stern Review for the UK Government and the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change).

In January 2007 the European Commission set out new proposals in its Communication "Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius: The way ahead for 2020 and beyond". The key targets in the Communication, as well as the broad thrust of the integrated energy and climate change strategy of which it forms a part, were endorsed by EU leaders at their summit in Brussels on 8-9 March 2007. The summit approved the objective to limit the rise of global temperature to 2°C compared to the pre-industrial era. The Member States also endorsed the goal of a 30% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 provided the EU decision would be followed by an international agreement, and a 20% unilateral commitment. Furthermore, at the end of the

² A report produced by Sir Nicholas Stern for the British Government, October 2006.

³ Under the Kyoto Protocol, the EU-15 (the 15 countries that were Members of the EU at the time of ratification of the Protocol) committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 8% below 1990 levels during the first commitment period from 2008 - 2012. The target is shared between the 15 Member States under a legally binding burden-sharing agreement, which sets out individual emissions targets for every Member State. Of the ten new Member States (those acceded on 1 May 2004), 8 have individual reduction targets of 6 or 8% under the Kyoto Protocol. Cyprus and Malta remain the only member states with no Kyoto targets.

negotiations, the Member States committed themselves to a target of a 20% EU average for renewable energies by 2020, half of which should come from bio-fuels.

The Spring Summit decisions paved the way for the EU preparations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali on 3-14 December 2007.

The EU mandate⁴ for the Bali negotiations, which successfully aimed at launching the follow-up process for the Kyoto Protocol which stipulates the international commitments until 2012, was adopted by the Environment Council on 30 October. In international negotiations EU will urge developed countries, as a group, to take the lead by committing to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases in the order of 30% by 2020. EU calls economically more advanced developing countries to contribute adequately according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities. The mandate stresses that a global carbon market is fundamental to assist in driving low-carbon investment. It underlines the need for greater international cooperation including on research, development, demonstration, deployment and transfer of new technology and underlines the importance of integrating climate change into development cooperation. The mandate, among others, further reaffirms the need to enhance efforts to address adaptation to climate change and reduce emissions from international aviation and maritime transport as well as deforestation.

The Bali Conference agreed to begin “a comprehensive process to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention [UNFCCC] through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012”. It also set the goal of a binding decision on a follow up of its Kyoto Protocol before the end of 2009. The conference established an Ad Hoc Working Group on Long-Term Cooperative Action to conduct the process.

The Bali Roadmap, renamed as the Bali Action Plan, contains the key building blocks of a future agreement. These are: enhanced mitigation of climate change by limiting or reducing emissions, adaptation to climate change, action on technology development and transfer, and scaling up of finance and investment to support mitigation and adaptation. The roadmap makes a reference to the findings of the recent scientific assessment by IPCC and recognises the target of 25-40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

At the European level, the discussion was re-boosted on 23 January 2008 when the European Commission put forward a far-reaching package of proposals with the aim to deliver on the Union's ambitious commitments agreed in March 2007.

The proposed package includes several concrete proposals for action:

⁴ The European Parliament, with its co-legislative powers, was heavily involved in the process in planning the EU mandate. (See the links to the Parliament Resolution and to the temporary Climate Change Committee, which was tasked to prepare it.)

An improved EU ETS will cover more emissions and will allow firms in one EU country to buy allowances in any other.

For the economic sectors not covered by the ETS such as agriculture, waste, buildings and transport, EU Member States received binding national emission targets, with richer countries receiving stricter targets than poorer ones. The targets reflect each country's individual needs and potential. Twelve of the less economically developed Member States, including almost all the countries that joined since 2004, are actually permitted to increase their greenhouse gas emissions.

The package prescribes legally binding and enforceable targets for increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix. The proposal takes into consideration the level of economic development as well as previous efforts of respective EU Member States. However, even those countries, which already achieved relatively high shares of renewable energy, have to further increase their targets.

The most controversial element in the package concerns the target of 10% use of biofuels in transport. Environmental groups maintain that biofuels increase greenhouse gas emissions and undermine food security in the developing world. They believe that the production of bio-fuels can lead to destruction of forests to make way for crops and stress that both the process itself and the transportation of the end-product consume energy. Rather than indiscriminately supporting all bio-fuels, they would very much prefer to see bio-fuels favoured according to their environmental performance.

The package also calls on the Member States to save 20% of energy consumption by 2020 through energy efficiency.

Finally, the package seeks to promote new rules on the development and safe use of carbon capture and storage, a set of technologies that allows the carbon dioxide emitted by industrial processes to be captured and stored underground where it cannot contribute to global warming as well as on environmental subsidies.

Now unveiled, the Commission proposal must gain the approval of the European Parliament and the EU Member States. The Environmental Affairs Council of 3 March 2008 provided the first guidelines for the discussion (see the Council Conclusions), which the Commission together with the Slovenian and French EU Presidencies seek to conclude by a first reading agreement by the end of this year.

In an address to the European Parliament introducing these initiatives, President José Manuel Barroso called the package "the most far-reaching set of legislative proposals to be made by the European Commission for many years." "[Europe] will show how a modern economy can be designed to meet the challenge. This is sustainable development in action," he said.

EUROPEAN UNION AND NUCLEAR ENERGY

In October 2007, the European Parliament approved a resolution which recognises the use of nuclear energy as indispensable if basic energy needs are to be met in Europe in the medium term. The Parliament also referred to the 3rd IPCC report, which listed nuclear energy as one way of reducing climate change. However, the Parliament noted that the decision of Member States for or against nuclear energy remains within their exclusive competence, although that this may have an impact on electricity price trends within the EU.

The Parliamentary resolution largely confirms the views of the European Commission expressed in its January 2007 Communication on the Nuclear Illustrative Programme. In its Communication, the Commission defended the use of nuclear energy arguing that "nuclear electricity production costs' sensitivity to fluctuations in the costs of imports of the basic energy sources (uranium) is limited and, as underlined by the International Energy Agency, it is an economically viable generation option, provided environmental and societal concerns are appropriately taken into account." The Commission further stated that nuclear energy, essentially free of CO₂ emissions, makes an important contribution to mitigation of global climate change as a result of greenhouse gas emissions. The Commission also considered that the use of nuclear power contributes to the EU's energy mix, thereby mitigating concerns about potential shortfalls in the security of supply of electricity.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/sternreview_index.cfm

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change: <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>

Kyoto Protocol: http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php

European Commission website on climate change:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/home_en.htm

Communication "Limiting Global Climate Change to 2 degrees Celsius: The way ahead for 2020 and beyond" (COM(2007)0002) and other related documents:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/future_action.htm

Conclusions of the European Council (Spring Summit) 8-9 March 2007:
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/93135.pdf

Conclusions of the Environment Council 30 October 2007, Mandate for Bali negotiations:
<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st14/st14632.en07.pdf>

EP Temporary Committee on Climate Change:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/tempcom/clim/default_en.htm

Commission Energy package 2007:

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy_policy/index_en.htm

Official website of the Bali Conference including the Bali Action Plan:

http://unfccc.int/meetings/cop_13/items/4049.php

Website of the climate action and renewable energy package 2008:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/focus/energy-package-2008/index_en.htm

Environmental Council conclusions of 3 March 2008.

http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/March/0303_ENV3.pdf

European Parliament resolution of 24 October 2007 on Conventional energy sources and energy technology:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2007-0468&language=EN&ring=A6-2007-0348>

Commission Communication "Nuclear Illustrative Programme Presented under Article 40 of the Euratom Treaty for the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee" (COM(2006)0844):

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0844en01.pdf

CHURCHES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

For churches, the care for the environment is part of a broader concern. The European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) underlines that, in the light of Christian mission and concern for justice, churches are also called to act. Technological efficiency can make a huge contribution but it is becoming increasingly apparent that possible solutions for the environmental crisis have to go beyond technology. They must build on a compatible value set-up and promote new options in our way of life. Individual members of society must organise their personal lifestyle in a way that is consistent with the requirements of sustainability.

The last ECEN Assembly hosted by the Church of Sweden in September 2006 adopted *A call to every church and Christian in Europe*, which underlines sufficiency, efficiency, renewables and planet perspectives as the basic principles for churches' attitudes to the problem of energy⁵.

⁵ The full text is annexed to this document.

Climate change and its link to a sustainable lifestyle was one of the themes discussed at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly (EEA3) in Sibiu in September 2007. The conclusions of the Creation Forum read as follows:

Global climate change is one of the greatest threats for the present and for future generations. Without a change of mind and heart, technological solutions or political negotiations to protect the climate will not achieve their goals.

The churches should therefore give priority to the cause of responsible and sustainable life styles. The specific contribution of the churches to the environmental movement is a better understanding of our interconnectedness with all of creation. Today a simple lifestyle is an important Christian witness. The Christians and churches in Europe are called to use the Creation time (from 1st September to St Francis day) to pray and act in response to this ecological crisis which already affects the lives of millions of people and the whole creation.

We commit ourselves to strengthen our current networks like ECEN in order to equip Christians for practical and political action ensuring that the earth's capacity rather than economic development takes priority.

We call churches to provide guiding examples that will inspire and encourage their members and the wider community to practice excellence in eco-management and substantially reduce their carbon footprint.

Full documentation on the creation Forum is available at the ECEN website:

<http://www.ecen.org/cms/index.php?page=sibiu07>

The Final Message of EEA3 recommends for all churches in Europe “that the period from 1st September to 4th October be dedicated to prayer for the protection of Creation and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles that reverse our contribution to climate change.”

From 24 to 28 September 2008 ECEN will organise its 7th Assembly under the title ‘The true challenge of climate change.’ Following the invitation of the Federation of the Protestant Churches in Italy, the Assembly will take place in the ‘Sacro Cuore’ conference centre, near to Milano.

The 7th ECEN Assembly will in its scope and content follow the previous Assembly organised in Sweden in September 2006 as well as take stock of the results of EEA3.

The aims of the 7th Assembly are:

- to identify the link between the theme of the Assembly and the life of the churches
- to offer churches in Europe guidance in dealing with the challenge of climate change
- to create space for sharing of practical examples of the churches’ work on climate change
- to deepen thematic work in the network

Along with reflections on developments in church and ecumenical life, the Assembly will pay attention to the developments on the international political scene. Outcomes of the recent UN meeting in Bali, as well as the latest EU initiatives, will provide the Assembly its socio-political context.

More information about the Assembly will soon be available at www.ecen.org

Other activities

In addition to the joint work among the churches in the framework of ECEN, number of CEC member churches have their own initiatives in this matter. Archbishop Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden will host an Inter-faith Climate Conference in Uppsala on 28-29 November 2008. The Swedish interfaith gathering will seek to deliver a strong ethical and religious message on issues such as declining food and water supplies in many developing countries. Between 30 and 40 internationally recognised policy-makers from different faiths, cultures and continents will be invited to sign a Uppsala Manifesto 2008. The hopes are that the manifesto could be presented by Archbishop Wejryd to a formal session of the UN conference, scheduled to meet December 1-12, 2008 in Poznan, western Poland. The Swedish Vice-President of the European Commission Margot Wallström has given a strong support for the process, and will be actively involved, as will Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank and Nobel Laureate. More information will soon be available at: www.svenskakyrkan.se/klimat.

The Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Finland has also responded to the call. Speaking at the national bishops' conference on 13 February 2007, Archbishop Jukka Paarma stressed the need for ecological responsibility. What we do, or do not, has an influence on the life of the God's creation, he said. He reminded the conference that climate change hits first and hardest the most vulnerable. He went on by emphasising that good life should not be based on high level of consumption and material living standards but on caring for others, mental balance, spiritual security and the joy of human relationships and God's gifts. It also involves ecologically responsible citizenship. In August 2007, the Church Council appointed a working group to prepare a climate programme. The programme, foreseen to be finalised by the end of March 2008, is to provide recommendations for the church as a whole, for parishes and individual church members on how to protect the climate.

The Church of England is providing a strong analytic input to the discussion. In August, the church published a briefing entitled "Climate change – not just a green issue", which argues and proves that securing a stable climate is ever more seen as a global public good that is essential for all human security and development. Later in the year, the Church of England issued two further documents. "Through the glass darkly – Europe and the politics of climate change" provides a critical assessment of the EU Emission Trading Scheme. It also examines the EU's response to climate change with respect to development cooperation as well as discusses EU policies regarding adaptation. The third document, "Towards a post Kyoto climate treaty for climate justice", explores the scientific and political challenges facing the Bali Climate Change Conference.

The Church of England documents are available at:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/international/climatechange/>

Bali involvement

Churches also played an active role prior to and during the Bali Conference. In a joint letter, sent on the eve of the Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of the Church of Sweden and the Chairman of the Council of the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland) urged governments and the European Commission to strengthen their efforts in addressing the challenge of climate change. Church leaders warned governments that “substantially reducing global emissions of greenhouse gasses will not avoid the serious impacts of climate change already experienced by many of the world’s most vulnerable communities”. They also reminded political leaders that climate change is not just about addressing environmental degradation; it is also about fighting poverty and providing for human security. It is a question of international justice.

Read the letter at: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/releases/071130.htm>

The representatives of churches and Christian agencies from Europe, Russia, the United States, Latin America and Asia on the 25-strong World Council of Churches (WCC) delegation, together with a few other religious organizations, brought a faith perspective to discussions in Bali. Follow up of the meeting and in particular ethical dimension of the climate change will be discussed at the ECEN Assembly in Italy in September 2008.

Information on the WCC delegation and its statement to the plenary:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1722/churches-want-to-see-a-ne.html>



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ANNEX:



european christian **environmental** network

Living in a New Energy Era

A call to every church and Christian in Europe from the ECEN Assembly in Flämslätt

ECEN has been considering the issue of energy at its Assembly in Flämslätt in September 2006. It examined energy previously in Minsk in 2001 when it asked "churches to commit themselves to promoting energy scenarios in which priority is unambiguously and deliberately given to energy saving and energy generation from renewable sources."

Energy production and consumption in Europe faces huge challenges today:

- climate change is an immediate and real threat
- peace is threatened by global energy inequalities and politics
- fossil fuel is rising in price as "peak oil" is approached
- nuclear power plants are being planned but are not an ethical option for many

These are symptoms of the distorted values of consumer societies which seek happiness by exploiting the resources of the world instead of enjoying its blessings in Christian love. In the light of Christian mission and concern for justice, we call churches, as big energy consumers, to action. Energy in the physical sense of the term is embedded in a wider horizon of spiritual energy and vital energies. In God's liberating compassion our God is like the bush which burns and is not consumed (Ex. 3). In Jesus Christ, God communicates to us the healing and transforming power of love (Jn. 15.9). Love is the energy of faith (Gal. 5.6), God's infinite gift for finite beings in a finite world. Such is the leading perspective for Christian responsibility in the field of energy needs, energy use and energy politics.

Sufficiency

The atmosphere, water and soil of planet earth on which God has placed us has limits which our demands for energy are exceeding. We need to learn to live within the limits of the carrying capacity of the earth and bear Christian witness through changed lifestyles.

But the biodiversity of life, its variety and beauty, the opportunities for scientific discovery and artistic creativity, the ways in which nature can lead us closer to God, have no limits.

Raise awareness about the need for less speed and consumption: and long for the true wealth of the earth.

Efficiency

The reasons to save energy are undeniable. You can cut energy bills by a large percentage, it is cheap, it does not involve complicated technology, it does not involve sacrifice.

Why don't we all do it? It is not glamorous, it is tedious to implement, there is nothing to be seen when it is done, and there is always something more interesting to do.

Sort out energy efficiency in the church, in the homes of the congregation, and in transport:

- **carry out an audit of energy use and mobility patterns**
- **make a list of actions with a timescale**
- **implement them before the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in September 2007.**

Renewables

The production of energy should be as much as possible through renewables and as much as possible on a small scale and local basis.

Find out about European energy policy and production and engage with your politicians on these issues.

Churches are well placed to be generators of electricity through small scale renewables. Doing this will help you understand the value of energy and use it wisely. Sustainably generated energy will be for the benefit of the community.

Generate energy of your own, for example by solar heating, small hydro, biomass power, or a small wind turbine, keeping in mind the protection of nature.

Planet perspective

Community level energy does not mean being blind to the rest of the world. We need always to remember that our everyday actions are directly affecting the whole of life:

- people in the 'majority world' – because justice demands that they enjoy God's gifts in equal measure to ourselves.
- nonhuman species and ecosystems – because life on the planet is loved by God and a blessing to us, not merely a resource to exploit.
- future generations – because we are causing irreparable damage to God's earth on which they will live.

After exploring the possibilities above, compensate for carbon you emit by giving money to a project for sustainable energy in the south.

We in the European Christian Environmental Network, challenge you, our churches, to take action in each of these four areas before the European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu in September 2007.

We invite you to write a short report or press release of what you have done in each area and then:

- tell us by emailing webeditor@ecen.org
- tell your community through posters, events, newsletters, artwork
- tell your politicians and ask them to support your work by taking action through the local, national and European governments.

We hope that this paper will encourage and help you to take action on energy in your local church.

Lord, fill us with your energy to turn our ideas into love and our love into action for the benefit of others and the wellbeing of your creation. AMEN.

Information on energy issues, links to church initiatives, and ways to get involved, are on these web pages

Flämslätt, October 2006