



Conference of European Churches  
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## CSC Briefing on Climate Change

### CLIMATE CHANGE: A SUMMARY

Climate change is one of the greatest environmental, social and economic threats facing the planet. Evidence of the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, as is now observed from increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level. 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 a further 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.

Projected global warming this century is likely to trigger serious consequences for humanity and other life forms, including a rise in sea levels of between 18 and 59 cm 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”<sup>1</sup>. In addition, climate change risks causing major disruption to economic and social activity. According to the Stern

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<sup>1</sup> 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>

Review on the Economics of Climate Change<sup>2</sup> 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>), the main gas responsible for climate change, as well as of other 'greenhouse' gases.

## **EU ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

The European Union 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 Protocol<sup>3</sup>, 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 new 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, this ambitious programme is failing to deliver achievements of reductions over current levels of emissions due to the lack of ambition of the EU Member States and the dominance of economic considerations. The lack of proven commitment until now 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 report 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

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<sup>2</sup> A report produced by Sir Nicholas Stern for the British Government, October 2006

<sup>3</sup> 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.

agreement, and also approved a 20% unilateral commitment. Furthermore, at the end of tough negotiations, the Member States managed to commit themselves to a target of a 20% EU average for renewable energies by 2020, half of which should come from bio-fuels<sup>4</sup>.

The Spring Summit decisions paved the way for the ongoing EU preparations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which will be held in Bali on 3-14 December. Commitments made under the Kyoto Protocol for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions run to 2012. It is the EU's aim to ensure that the Bali Conference marks the first step in building a post-2012 framework on tackling climate change and that a final agreement could be found in 2009.

The EU mandate for Bali negotiations was adopted by the Environment Council on 30 October. The Council conclusions 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. Economically more advanced developing countries are called 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 European Parliament, with its co-legislative powers, was heavily involved in the process in planning the EU mandate. The resolution concerning the EU guidelines for Bali negotiations was drafted by Satu Hassi MEP (Greens/EFA, Finland) and adopted by the Climate Change Committee<sup>5</sup> on 22 October 2007. It recalled the objective of the long-term goal of limiting average global temperature increase to below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. However, the text also referred to the latest evidence, which suggests that the 2°C goal "might not be sufficient to avoid significant negative effects of climate change".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Although the summit results were widely welcomed as a major breakthrough in safeguarding the future of the planet, environmental NGOs and the Greens are concerned about the EU's commitment to bio-fuels. 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 some bio-fuels favoured according to their environmental performance.

<sup>5</sup> The Temporary Committee on Climate Change was established in April 2007. It will serve a twelve-month term.

<sup>6</sup> According to the Climate Change Committee, the EU mandate should have been based on the following elements: binding targets for all industrialised countries; broader participation in reduction efforts, in particular by emerging economies through fair and proportionate targets; a global "cap and trade" system based on a fair and proportionate allocation of quotas; strengthened financial mechanisms for adaptation; effective incentives to avoid deforestation (accounting for some 20% of global greenhouse gas emissions), including the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices; instruments, financial and other, for clean development and technology transfer and deployment (including further development of the Clean Development Mechanism; agreement by 2009 at the latest).

The other important issues currently under discussion at EU level include the directive on aviation emissions, which foresees the inclusion of aviation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme by 2012 as well as the directive on car emissions. Furthermore, the Commission intends to present a major climate and energy package on 23 January 2008. The package covers the sharing of the burden among EU Member States in order to achieve the EU's planned CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction targets; proposals on the allocation of national contributions to meeting the target of developing renewable energy sources and reviewing EU ETS.

## 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, but 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 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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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](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](http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php)

European Commission website on climate change:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/home\\_en.htm](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" and other related documents:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/future\\_action.htm](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](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](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/comparl/tempcom/clim/default_en.htm)

Commission Energy package:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy_policy/index_en.htm)

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](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 energy<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> 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 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 the Assembly recommends for all churches in Europe 'that the period from 1<sup>st</sup> 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.'

In addition to the joint work among the churches in the framework of ECEN, several CEC member churches are increasingly building their work in this matter. Archbishop Anders Wejryd of the Church of Sweden will host an Inter-faith Climate Conference in Uppsala in November 2008. The purpose of this conference is to equip the participants with information on how to influence global negotiations on climate in their respective platforms. The Swedish Vice-President of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, was the first to join this project and the Ecumenical Patriarch, well known for his engagement in this matter, has also shown a great interest.

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 to emphasise 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 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. This month, the Church of England is issuing 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 Bali.

All the Church of England documents will soon be available at:

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



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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](mailto: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