



Conference of European Churches



Churches responding to climate change

Joint CEC - CCEE Letter to the Churches in Europe

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This letter comes to you as a joint letter from the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). It addresses one of the key concerns we have together to face.

Climate change is an issue for each one of us. It affects the life of the whole planet. Earth and all its ecosystems is a precious gift which we have received from God.

In the face of global crisis - economic, environmental or any other - , we are called to live in the way that shows the Faith and Hope and Love which we bear towards God, as well as our respect for the whole of God's creation.

In a world of limited natural resources we need to foster a lifestyle which prevents all abuse of God's gifts in creation and promotes a good stewardship of all that God has given us in Creation. In this perspective, we need to reduce our dependence on increasing consumption of energy, in particular consumption of fossil-based energy.

Industrialised countries have to take the lead in these efforts, on the basis also of their responsibility for decades of accumulating Green House Gasses (GHGs) in the Earth's atmosphere. The cumulative effect of these GHGs is one of many challenges which we need to manage on the level of political decision-making. It also challenges us to modify our daily lives as communities and individuals.

At the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen from 7-18 December this year, important decisions will be made which will influence many aspects of our lives from now into the foreseeable future. CEC and CCEE together with many individual Churches in Europe believe that the issues discussed at the conference and the challenges we face are not only to do with technicalities of climate change: ethics, culture, faith and religion are substantive elements

of our lifestyle and must be taken into account if climate change is to be effectively tackled and integral human development secured. We know that only with a really human ecology, which takes account of the rights but also the responsibilities which we bear towards each other and towards future generations, can a better care for the environment be foreseen.

We believe that the EU has to step up its efforts to recognise the mutual responsibility of member countries to combat climate change

In the light of this:

We encourage Churches and Christians in Europe to take appropriate action to address the challenge of climate change in the weeks to come:

- We encourage them to approach their respective governments and to invite them, with courageous generosity, to take strong action in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change. The impact of the economic crisis must not be an excuse for avoiding effective action on the protection of the environment.
- We encourage Churches in Europe to note that the challenge of climate change is an issue of justice. Those who have contributed least to the problem of climate change, because they live in less developed and less industrialized regions, are the first to feel the effects. We need to recognise their concerns and to join together in addressing them.
- We need to acknowledge that climate change can cause untold suffering and hardship, can hamper integral human development and can harm creation. We support the development of new financial instruments enabling to tackle these problems.
- We encourage Churches to take part in initiatives for saving energy, in the promotion of renewable energy, in addressing the negative effects of climate change and in educating to an ecological responsibility aimed at safeguarding an authentic human ecology.
- We encourage networking, sharing of initiatives and good practices leading to the care of creation as emphasised and recommended in the outcomes of the 3rd European Ecumenical Assembly in 2007 in Sibiu (Romania).

We invite Churches to engage in common prayer, in solidarity with those suffering the negative effects of climate change, in a common search for wisdom and perseverance in changing our inappropriate lifestyles. On Sunday 13th December 2009 in the Lutheran Cathedral in Copenhagen there will be an ecumenical act of worship as part of the UN conference on climate change. We invite you to join in these prayers in your own way, so joining the extended community of people praying in Copenhagen and in many parts of the world. At 15h00 the churches in Denmark will ring their bells, and Christians around the world are invited to echo them by sounding their own bells 350 times at 15h00 local time. More information about the initiative can be found on the www.bellringing350.org. What is envisaged is a chain of chimes and prayers stretching in a time-line from the Fiji Islands in the South

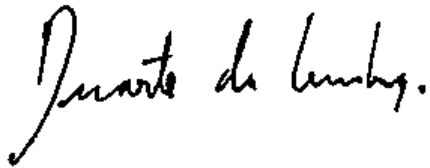
Pacific – where the day first begins, and where the negative effects of climate change are already felt, to northern Europe and across the globe.

We ask God for His grace and wisdom to equip us to face the challenges of the current environmental crisis. We do that in response to the call of Jesus in the Gospel to promote societies which are characterised by justice and solidarity

CCEE and CEC, in close partnership with the European Christian Environmental Network (ECEN) actively monitor the situation. We will be glad to respond to any questions and needs of clarification resulting from this letter.

With God's blessing

St. Gallen/Geneva, 6 November 2009

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Duarte da Cunha". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Duarte da Cunha
CCEE General Secretary

A handwritten signature in gold ink, reading "Colin Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ven. Colin Williams
CEC General Secretary