



THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

A COMMUNION OF CHURCHES – EINE KIRCHENGEMEINSCHAFT – UNA COMUNIÓN DE IGLESIAS – UNE COMMUNION D'ÉGLISES
LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND – FEDERACIÓN LUTERANA MUNDIAL – FÉDÉRATION LUTHÉRIENNE MONDIALE

General Secretariat - Office for International Affairs and Human Rights

Statement on the UN Climate Change Conference

By Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko

General Secretary, The Lutheran World Federation

5 December 2007

The United Nations Climate Change Conference presently taking place in Bali, Indonesia, brings together representatives of over 180 countries as well as observers from intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the media. The two-week conference comprises the 13th Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the 3rd Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

This conference comes at the end of a year in which climate change, its consequences, and the need for an urgent and effective response, have received greater attention than ever before. It is now clear that human-induced climate change has been occurring for some time and that we face a future threat of unprecedented proportions. The work of the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recognized in the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize, has been particularly important in highlighting the gravity of the threat. We realize that climate change has very wide implications for the protection and preservation of God's creation, and for human development and survival. We are confronted by the real prospect of much more serious and frequent extreme weather events, substantial loss of productive agricultural land, the extinction of numerous species and the concomitant loss of biodiversity, and the disappearance of low-lying island nations and coastal areas. Moreover, the brunt of the impacts of climate change – caused mostly by the emissions of the industrialized world – will fall most heavily on those living in the poorest communities in developing countries.

The Lutheran World Federation directly experiences and increasingly understands the dramatic impact of climate change in its member churches and field programs, many of them in areas most vulnerable to climate change. As a global communion of churches, we suffer with those affected in different parts of the world and are called to take concerted actions that will be effective in mitigating the impacts of climate change, especially on the poorest and most vulnerable communities.

Former US Vice President Al Gore has said that “the climate crisis is not a political issue, it is a moral and spiritual challenge to all of humanity.” I agree with him. As I remarked on the occasion of the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize to the IPCC and Mr Gore, “The dimensions of this crisis transcend politics. It calls for engagement at the most fundamental ethical level.”

The government representatives meeting at the Bali Conference must take concrete steps

*P.O. Box 2100, Route de Ferney 150,
CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Tel +41/22-791 61 11, Direct +41/22-791 63 64
Fax +41/22-791 66 30, E-mail pnf@lutheranworld.org*



towards consensus on the necessary actions required after the end of the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period in 2012. And those actions must be radical and far-reaching if the trends already underway are to be stabilized and reversed. Global average surface temperature can still be limited to a sub-catastrophic increase of 2° C above the pre-industrial level, but only if global greenhouse gas emissions are reduced to at least 30% of the 1990 level by 2020 and 80% by 2050. This is a gargantuan political, scientific and ethical challenge.

Religious leaders have an essential role to play in meeting this challenge. Our resources of theological and ethical reflection and moral leadership will be of critical importance in building the community commitment, and the political will, to make the fundamental behavioural shifts that will be necessary if the required targets are to be met. Only when we come to appreciate much more practically the nature of our relationship with each other and with God's creation can such radical changes in behaviour be expected. The 'pastoral infrastructure' of religious communities gives us an important capacity and responsibility in awareness-raising and education regarding climate change and the necessary responses. It will be our role to inspire change and to reconnect communities with cultural and traditional wisdom regarding ways of relating to and living in God's creation. Our indigenous sisters and brothers have much to share with us in this regard, if only we will listen and learn from them. Indeed, humanity as a whole can no longer afford to ignore the environmental wisdom of Indigenous Peoples.

This challenge is also a challenge to inter-faith cooperation, to our capacity to live together in this world and to respond together to common problems. As I also noted at the time of the award of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize,

All faith traditions acknowledge the sacredness of creation. The threat of climate change demands that our common respect for creation be recognized as a basis for interfaith cooperation to protect and preserve the earth and to assure just, sustainable life for all.

I pray that political leaders meeting in Bali and subsequently will find the wisdom to achieve what must be achieved by 2009 in order to establish a credible and effective post-Kyoto regime for responding to climate change. And I pray that religious leaders, working alongside political and other community leaders, will contribute our special capacities and resources to meeting this unprecedented challenge and to changing the way human beings live together in God's precious creation.