



THE
LUTHERAN
WORLD
FEDERATION

A Communion
of Churches

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Statement on Climate Justice

On 16 June 2014 the LWF Council adopted the following Public Statement:

The Lutheran World Federation, a communion consisting of 72 million Lutherans worldwide, regards the challenge of present and future Climate Change with utmost seriousness. Both from the perspective of our belief in God as the Creator and from the perspective of justice and human rights, Climate Change is a matter that must be urgently addressed by human beings in our age.

“As Christians, we do not live in the despair and melancholy of the tomb, but in the light of the Risen Christ. Our resurrection hope is grounded in the promise of renewal and restoration for all of God’s Creation, which gives us energy, strength and perseverance in the face of overwhelming challenge. For us, this promise is more than an abstraction. It is a challenge to commit ourselves to walk a different course and serve as the hands of God in working to heal the brokenness of our hurting world.” (*Joint statement of the Episcopal Church, the Church of Sweden, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), May 2013*)

The LWF expresses its gratitude for its longstanding partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the ACT Alliance in caring for creation and working together for climate justice.

This statement aims to:

- provide background information about the engagement of the LWF with climate justice,
- present the position of the LWF regarding Climate Change, and
- propose ideas for the work of LWF on this issue up to 2016.

Background

2014 is crucial year in shaping the human response to Climate Change, during which the United Nations will determine the scale and ambition of a global warming treaty. In this context, religious leaders play an important role in advocating for an ambitious and

binding global agreement on climate change. The upcoming December 2014 UN Climate Change Conference in Lima (Conference of Parties [COP] 20) will lay the foundations for binding agreements which must be reached in Paris in December 2015 (COP21). Throughout the year, there are significant moments in the climate advocacy calendar, and LWF will be represented at all of them:

- The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) session in Bonn, Germany
- The UN Climate Summit in New York, USA
- COP20 in Lima, Peru

At this critical juncture we look back and recall:

- the Public Statement of the Tenth Assembly in 2003 on the United States and the Kyoto Protocol,
- the Resolution adopted by the LWF Council in 2008 on Climate Change,
- the Resolution adopted by the LWF Eleventh Assembly in 2010 on Climate Change,
- the recommendation from the LWF Delegation to the COP18,
- the capacity building work on advocating for climate justice by the Department for Mission and Development and the Department for Theology and Public Witness, and
- the work of the LWF Department for World Service in responding to this issue through its projects of adaptation to climate change in the field.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) fifth Assessment Report (AR5) is in the final stages of completion. It concludes that the reality of Climate Change is “unequivocal” and that there is increasing certainty that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions play a measurable and significant role.

Science detects human influence in the warming of the atmosphere and the ocean, in changes in the global water cycle, in reductions in snow and ice, in global mean sea level rise, and in changes in some climate extremes. This evidence for human influence has increased since AR4 in 2007. It is therefore extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause of scientifically observed warming since the mid-20th century. (IPCC, 10.3-10.6, 10.9)

It seems that many aspects of climate change will persist for centuries even if we succeed in halting the increase in CO₂ emissions. This presents the need to create a long-term, multi-century Climate Change commitment as a result of past, present and future emissions of CO₂ gases. (IPCC, p. 27)

The Position of the LWF

As a result of these reports, the LWF understands that:

- Climate change is real and influenced by human actions;
- Increasingly severe impacts are already being experienced on every continent, with growing economic and social costs;
- If we act now it will still be possible to keep global warming below the internationally agreed danger-threshold of an increase of 2 degrees Celsius. To achieve this, carbon pollution must be reduced quickly; and
- Climate change is a matter of social and economic justice, as it most affects the poorest people and displaces the most vulnerable.

As those who live in the resurrection hope of renewal and restoration for all of God's Creation, we believe we cannot stand by and ignore the impacts of Climate Change. Creation groans under the weight of human action and inaction (Rom 8:22). Our hope for justice and peace for all, and our trust in God, forms the impetus for this statement. We believe that taking global action now can make a difference.

Call for Commitment by the World's Leaders

1. The LWF calls on world political and business leaders to:

- a. Design and agree on elements of a strong global response to climate change that reflects the strong and growing scientific and environmental evidence and draft an ambitious new climate agreement to tackle climate change in the coming decades;
- b. Urge Heads of State and key decision makers to make it a personal priority to address the human contribution to Climate Change, and make firm commitments for deeper cuts in carbon pollution;
- c. Make national contributions meaningful by ensuring that they feature convincing targets to reduce carbon pollution while providing money to help poorer countries take climate action as well; and
- d. Respect the principles of equity, ensuring that the response includes provisions to assist the most vulnerable communities to adapt to the impacts of Climate Change already being experienced, and to account for the loss and damage being caused.

Call for Commitment by Member Churches

2. The LWF calls on its member churches to:

- e. Take action now to initiate or strengthen policies and practices aimed at becoming sustainable and eco-friendly, with the goal of becoming carbon-neutral at organizational, congregational and personal levels by 2050;
- f. Help and galvanize each other in the communion by sharing their good practices through the LWF Facebook page "LWF for Climate Justice";
- g. Engage in sustained climate justice advocacy with local and national governments as soon as possible, in the perspective of COP20 in Lima, Peru, and all along the process leading to COP21 in Paris, France. This advocacy would be based upon the advocacy call of the LWF and the policy papers on climate justice of the ACT Alliance;
- h. Promote and work with ecumenical and interfaith climate justice initiatives in the local, national and regional contexts; and
- i. Sign up to the #fastfortheclimate campaign on the 1st day of each month until December 1, 2015, at the beginning of COP21 in Paris:

"We fast in solidarity with the poor and vulnerable who are unduly affected by extreme weather events. We fast to underline the urgency of the negotiations on climate change. We fast in many different places and faith communities worldwide, united in a common practice. We fast for climate justice." <http://www.lutheranworld.org/fastfortheclimate>.

A Joint Commitment to Global Action

As leaders of the Lutheran World Federation – A Communion of Churches, we commit to join the global Christian community, and people of all faiths and persuasions, on the journey for climate justice. This task is one that we can only achieve when we unite in a common cause, living out our joint destiny on this fragile, beautiful world which we all share.

Medan, Indonesia