

Statement on CLIMATE CHANGE

August 12, 2005

Although the data regarding climate change is sometimes debated, the seriousness of the situation is generally accepted. Climate change affects everyone. Unless we take radical and immediate measures to reduce emissions stemming from unsustainable — in fact unjustifiable, if not simply unjust — excesses in the demands of our lifestyle, the impact will be both alarming and imminent.

Climate change is much more than an issue of environmental preservation. Insofar as human-induced, it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem. To persist in the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly. It is no less than suicidal, jeopardizing the diversity of the very earth that we inhabit, enjoy and share.

Moreover, climate change constitutes a matter of social and economic justice. For those who will most directly and severely be affected by climate change will be the poorer and more vulnerable nations (what Christian Scriptures refer to as our neighbour) as well as the younger and future generations (the world of our children, and of our children's children).

There is a close link between the economy of the poor and the warming of our planet. Conservation and compassion are intimately connected. The web of life is a sacred gift of God — ever so precious and ever so delicate. We must serve our neighbor and preserve our world with both humility and generosity, in a perspective of frugality and solidarity alike.

Faith communities must undoubtedly put their own houses in order; their adherents must embrace the urgency of the issue. This process has already begun, although it must be intensified. Religions realize the primacy

of the need for a change deep within people's hearts. They are also emphasizing the connection between spiritual commitment and moral ecological practice.

Faith communities are well-placed to take a long-term view of the world as God's creation. In theological jargon, that is called "eschatology." Moreover, we have been taught that we are judged on the choices we make. Our virtue can never be assessed in isolation from others, but is always measured in solidarity with the most vulnerable. Breaking the vicious circle of economic stagnation and ecological degradation is a choice, with which we are uniquely endowed at this crucial moment in the history of our planet.