

‘Green Patriarch’ backs strong Copenhagen agreement

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The Christian Orthodox Church’s most senior leader has issued a statement urging world leaders to join him and his more than 200 million followers in pushing for a strong and fair climate deal in Copenhagen this December.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, nicknamed the ‘Green Patriarch’ for his longtime support of environmental issues, is calling on political leaders participating in climate change talks this week in Bangkok to agree on strong and fair measures to mitigate climate change in advance of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen this December.

Bartholomew is among a growing number of religious leaders from various denominations weaving environmental awareness into their teachings and activities. Last year, more than 400 mosques in Malaysia held sermons focused on turtle conservation issues to discuss the need for better wildlife protection in that country.

“The accomplishment of a good agreement within the framework of the international negotiations in Copenhagen does not solely constitute a moral imperative for the conservation of God’s creation,” Patriarch Bartholomew said in a statement issued this week.

“It is also a route for economic and social sustainability. Taking action against climate change should not be understood as a financial burden, but as an important opportunity for a healthier planet, to the benefit of all humanity and particularly of those states whose economic development is lagging behind. We pray for the achievement of the best possible international agreement during the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen, so that the industrialized countries undertake generous commitments for a total reduction of the polluting greenhouse gas emissions by 40

percent until 2020, compared to the 1990 levels, as well as for the provision of important financial support to the developing countries”.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate is the highest office of the Orthodox Church and is based in Istanbul, Turkey.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew serves as the spiritual leader to approximately 300 million Orthodox Christian faithful across the globe. Since his election in October 1991, Bartholomew has often spoken publicly about the moral imperative to protect the environment, according to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Demetres Karavellas, CEO of WWF-Greece welcomed the Patriarch’s statement, saying: “The call for strong political commitment against climate change by the leading Primate of the Orthodox Church is a very clear message. It is time for world leaders to listen to this ecumenical message and achieve a strong binding climate deal at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen in December.”