

MESSAGE

By His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

to

the 20th World Energy Congress

November 13, 2007

Rome, Italy

Dear participants of the 20th World Energy Congress,

It is with particular pleasure that we congratulate the organizers and greet the participants of this prestigious international gathering and exhibition, which are hosted by the World Energy Council in the historical city of Rome and aim at exploring the future of energy development within an interdependent world.

The proper development and distribution of the energy resources of our planet is clearly one of the most critical and urgent problems facing our world. We are in the throes of an energy crisis and we can no longer afford to risk moving along our present path of indiscriminate waste and devastation. We are obliged to review our ways radically, something which in our theological tradition is called "repentance." This is precisely why it is a source of great joy and personal satisfaction to observe the stated goals of your world congress: namely, "debating and solving economic issues of both industrialized and developing countries," as well as "seeking ways for a sustainable use of energy resources to the benefit of the entire world."

These two fundamental goals also articulate – in an eloquent and at the same time powerful manner – the spiritual conviction and sacred worldview that our Ecumenical Patriarchate has propounded in recent decades. For there is no doubt that, first of all, in raising ecological awareness among people throughout the world, we have endeavored to draw the essential and intimate connection between sustainable development and social justice. Indeed, the energy problem is invariably connected to the social problem of poverty. This is because all ecological activity is ultimately measured by its impact upon other people, and especially the poor. And in this regard, industrialized nations are called to bear the burden both of greater responsibility and greater sacrifice. Interdependence implies greater initiative for the privileged.

Second, the phrase "to the benefit of the entire world" is reminiscent of the biblical phrase in the New Testament, which is also the root and source of liturgical practice in the Orthodox Church. The phrase "for the life of the world" – found in the Gospel of St. John (chapter 6, verse 51) – at once determines and defines our understanding of a spiritual worldview, which calls for communion and sharing in a world of division and inequality, challenging us to work for a just society where everyone has sufficient for survival, where the natural resources of our planet are plentiful for all.

Dear delegates, the energy crisis of our age is not primarily an ecological or economical matter. Rather, it is a spiritual crisis concerning the way we perceive our planet's resources. We are treating our world in an inhumane, godless manner precisely because we fail to see it as a gift received from above, which it is in turn our obligation to respect and return to future generations. It is our fervent prayer, then, that your congress will explore possibilities and discern ways of changing the way we perceive the world. Otherwise, we shall continue to deal with symptoms and not their causes.

May God bless you all in your deliberations.