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News article

'Green' Patriarch sounds warning on climate change

By Stephen Brown

Sibiu, Romania, 5 September (ENI)--Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I has issued a warning saying climate change, which threatens the survival of humanity, needs to be dealt with immediately.

"There is no time for waiting or delay. Otherwise, we are willingly and irresponsibly, even dangerously, shutting our eyes," Bartholomeos said on 5 September at the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu, Romania. "What must immediately take place is repentance, together with the change of life that accompanies repentance."

Bartholomeos, who is based in Istanbul, the former Constantinople and one time capital of the Byzantine empire, is sometimes called the Green Patriarch because of his public support for the environmental cause.

More than 2000 participants are attending the 4-9 September assembly from Europe's main Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican and Orthodox traditions.

"We are concerned about God's creation, which is constantly and shamelessly rendered the object of abuse," the Patriarch said. "We are concerned about the elementary climate and other conditions - quite literally, about the air and the oxygen breathed by modern man and which future generation, as we fear, will seek in vain," Bartholomeos said. "We are, finally, concerned about humanity's mere survival on this continent and our planet."

From Sibiu, Patriarch Bartholomeos was to travel to an interfaith symposium that he promoted in the Arctic Circle to highlight the environmental damage faced by the region's ecosystem.

The Sibiu assembly is organized by the Conference of European Churches and the Council of European (Roman Catholic) Bishops' Conferences (CCEE). The two groupings account for most of Europe's Roman Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox churches. The meeting follows similar assemblies in Basel, Switzerland, in 1989 and in Graz, Austria, in 1997.

