

IFES Symposium on Climate Change

Runaway Bay, Jamaica, 20-25 October 2008

SYMPOSIUM STATEMENT

Part I: PREAMBLE

Participants from 16 countries of the global north and south gathered at Runaway Bay, Jamaica, 20-25 October 2008 for an international symposium on Faith and Environment. We learned from experts of a wide body of evidence of the significant challenges posed by global climate change. We heard stories of the serious impacts of climate change on the environments of countries in South America, the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and in the South Pacific. We discussed in depth the key issues and how to respond to the pleas for practical help and assistance from participants. We spent time in worship, reflection and meditation on what it means to be stewards of God's creation and agents of his redemptive work in the world especially in relation to our responsibility to care for the poor and most vulnerable in our local and global community

Part II: AFFIRMATIONS

We affirm that:

- 1 God created and sustains the world through His Word and His Spirit as a continuing act of love.
- 2 God's creation is a gift to us to unfold His glory and to enable all to flourish as His creatures.
- 3 Both intentionally and unintentionally, through action and inaction, we have not fulfilled our God-given commission to be good stewards of Creation nor God's command to love our neighbours as ourselves. Consequently the abuse of His creations, human and non-human, has resulted in suffering, ecosystem collapse and injustice to the poor.
- 4 The scientific evidence linking humankind's actions to observed changes in our climate, oceans and biosphere is now conclusive. Urgent action is needed using all available means to counteract climate change, to assist those communities least able to adapt to its adverse impacts and to protect biodiversity.
- 5 We need urgently to rethink the moral roots of the global economic system and move as rapidly as possible toward a system that is truly sustainable.
- 6 Our hope for the world is founded on the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church is called to practice that hope in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to live God's promised future in the present in anticipation of God's final redemption.

Part III: COVENANTS

We, the participants of this symposium, covenant with each other and before God to:

- 1 Pursue a personal journey of minimizing our own contribution to climate change (“carbon footprint”) and developing a lifestyle of responsible stewardship.
- 2 Encourage the global IFES Fellowship to unite in prayer for the well-being of God’s creation; to audit and minimize its organizational carbon footprint; and to participate with us in these covenants.
- 3 Prayerfully communicate the reality and implications of climate change through:
 - increasing our own knowledge of the issues relating to climate change locally and globally
 - developing and contributing to programs of education and awareness raising
 - raising the issues and engaging with others on our university campuses
 - informing our local and national churches especially their leaders
 - informing and lobbying national governments and community leaders
- 4 Advocate - through partnerships involving governments, business and industry, churches, and Christian and secular networks - the acceptance internationally of the widely recommended target of an increase of global average temperature of less than 2 degrees C above the pre-industrial level. This implies extensive and urgent action, in particular:
 - halting tropical deforestation
 - changes in energy supply and use, in particular rapid deployment of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) and renewable energies to achieve carbon-free electricity and carbon-free transport. In addition, the acceleration of energy efficiency measures of all kinds.
- 5 Formulate programmes to adapt to the degree of climate change which cannot now be avoided:
 - for the protection of vulnerable human communities and for those who become environmental refugees - for instance, from sea level rise and extreme climate events
 - for minimizing loss of biodiversity and damage to ecosystems, especially forests, wetlands and coral reefs
 - for the protection of human health

Use our professional positions to promote change by:

 - Supporting the development of regional science centres to study the impact of climate change
 - Advocating for policy changes in our communities and our national governments
- 6 Persuade governments, churches and Christian organisations to provide for the world’s poorest people, especially in the areas of:
 - clean water
 - food security
 - cheap and sustainable energy.

Also, to hold our governments responsible for achieving the internationally owned Millennium Development Goals, especially Goal # 7 - ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>