

The Hope We Share: A Vision For Copenhagen

A Statement from the Anglican Communion Environmental Network

In preparation for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference Of Parties (COP) Meetings, the Fifteenth Session, to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009

To Anglicans Worldwide, to COP Delegates, Faith Community Representatives, Observer Organizations, Friends of Creation

Is there anyone who does not seek a sustainable world, a world which promotes justice and harmony for all and hope for future generations? May the participants of the Copenhagen conference meet in this spirit and combine to envision a better, more harmonious and just world.

We Anglicans are found in all corners of the globe and our experience is that the world is changing around us to the great disadvantage of the poorest of us and with considerable anxiety for all our children, in the developed and developing world alike. Anglicans in the Pacific and Bangladesh speak of the constant threat of rising waters. The millions of us who live on the continent of Africa know the constant threat of drought and failed crops. In Australia we are experiencing a considerable reduction in rainfall patterns with heightened threat from bush fires and severe lack of water. In some of our communities violence has already broken out as neighbouring tribes and families struggle to gain access to greatly reduced natural resources.

From all points of the globe we point to the reality of climate change and to the very serious effect it is already having upon our people; from severe weather events, to prolonged droughts, major floods, loss of habitat and changing seasons. Many of our peoples no longer have access to drinkable water, many of our farmers are no longer able to grow crops, and many of our peoples suffer from diseases which in the past have not affected us in our homelands. Sadly many of our peoples are now on the move in the vain hope that they might find another place to live, given the place of their birth can no longer support them.

Our faith and our ancestors have always taught us that the earth is our mother and deserves respect; we know that this respect has not been given. We know that like a mother the earth will continue to give its all to us. However, we also know that we are now demanding more than it is able to provide. Science confirms what we already know, our human footprint is changing the face of the earth and because we come from the earth, it is changing us too. We are engaged in the process of destroying our very being. If we cannot live in harmony with the earth, we will not live in harmony with one another.

Those of us who live in the developed world realise all too painfully that our contribution to the human foot print is unreasonably high while the burdensome consequences of climate change is unequally born by our sisters and brothers in the developing world who have contributed least to

the problem and who have limited if any choices available to respond to it. This is a moral issue.

The Lambeth Conferences of Anglican Bishops of 1998 and 2008 speak of creation as gift and sacrament which must be treated with respect and that 'human beings are both co-partners with the rest of creation, and living bridges between heaven and earth with responsibility to make personal and moral sacrifices for the common good of all creation'. The Anglican Consultative Council meeting held in Jamaica earlier this year called upon Anglicans everywhere to reduce their footprint by 5% year on year.

We cannot say we do not know, we have always known, but the pain we see in the changing landscape brings home to us the extent of the burden we carry and the urgency required in our response.

We look to the Copenhagen conference with hope but also with realism. We realise that this huge task must be tackled simultaneously from two directions. There needs to be common agreement, but there must also be a desire on the part of every nation to do what they know they must, not because they are legally bound, but because they share a vision for a more just and sustainable future. The world has every right to expect the conference to produce agreed and enforceable targets and outcomes. When a crisis hits a family, village, or nation, the benefits of living through it and sharing the reconstruction is itself a lasting heritage: the benefits which will flow to the human family as we share responsibility for this crisis will be infinitely greater than the perceived economic costs in some sectors. We have the chance to build a new world order of mutual trust and respect.

We pray that each nation will come to the conference wanting the highest level outcome; that demanding targets will be set, not in an attempt to discipline reluctant participants, or to give some preferential treatment which undermines the whole; but that a greater vision might be shared.

- Is it too much to hope that all developed countries will commit to significant and immediate reductions in total emissions and that they will work with developing countries to ensure continued development without increased emissions.
- Is it too much to hope that all subsidies for fossil fuels will be immediately halted and that subsidies will be increased for renewable energies in their development stages.
- Is it too much to hope that developed economies consciously break the nexus between economic growth and population expansion. Clearly world population is already at its absolute upper limits.
- Is it too much to hope that countries most responsible for increased emissions provide funds and expertise to mitigate the effects of climate change in those countries most adversely affected, investing in the protection of ecosystems and bio-diversity.

- Is it too much to hope that developed economies will no longer encourage rampant consumerism as a solution to perceived short term economic woes, but will slow consumerism, preserve resources, and invest in choices which minimise alienation through enhanced human fulfilment.
- Is it too much to hope that every country, developed and developing, will commit to the view that what is in the world's best interest is in their best interest.

We believe these hopes are reasonable and urgent, and we join with all our Christian sisters and brothers and those of other faiths in commitment to a sustainable future. "The earth is the Lord's".

We have always known that "without a vision, the people perish". The Copenhagen Conference can either produce a bland, minimalist set of non enforceable targets or it can sketch a vision to inspire the world and its peoples.

Leaders lead, please . . . do not let us down.

Our prayers will be with the world leaders as they meet to discuss the most important topic imaginable – the future of the world and its peoples.

Bishop George Browning Convener
Anglican Communion Environmental Network (ACEN)
<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/index.cfm>

Contact:

The Rt. Rev. George Browning, Convener
gandmbrowning@bigpond.com

The Rev. Ken Gray, Communications
canadaacen@shaw.ca

Office of the UN Observer, New York
unoffice@anglicancommunion.org

The Rev. Terrie Robinson, Anglican Communion Networks Coordinator
Terrie.Robinson@anglicancommunion.org

The ACEN
<http://acen.anglicancommunion.org/index.cfm>

As an official network of the Anglican Communion the ACEN strives:

- *To encourage Anglicans to support sustainable environmental practices as individuals and in the life of their communities.*
- *To provide information about policies embraced by synods, councils and commissions, and especially by the instruments of Unity (Statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Resolutions and Reports of the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council)*
- *To support local initiatives by providing information about ideas and best practices developed around the communion.*
- *To share information about resources and initiatives that may be of value to Anglicans everywhere.*
- *To provide an opportunity for interested Anglicans to meet both as a formal network, and informally via electronic media.*