

In Defense of Creation: cry justice and invest in the poor

**Keynote to the preparatory meeting of the European Delegates
to the General Conference of the United Methodist Church
Kiev, Ukraine, February 21-24, 2008**

Rev. Prof. Dr. Christoph Stückelberger, CEO of Globethics.net, Geneva

“Cry justice” is the title of a booklet of Nyansako Ni Nku, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroun and Moderator of the All Africa Conference of Churches AACC. Cry justice is the first step to overcome poverty and to safeguard creation. Before developing different aspects of an answer, we have to go a step back and ask the fundamental question: why should we cry? Why should we care for others? The answer seems obvious, but the actual behavior of millions of people seems to find many excuses to care: we cannot care for others, because we have no power, because we have our own problems, because it is too late, because we have to respect fate, because we have no money or because others should care, who are the root cause of the problem.

1. Why should we care?

A core contribution of the Christian faith and of Churches is to strengthen responsibility in the behaviour in this world, towards oneself, the neighbour and the whole of creation. In all value systems, responsibility is a key value. Yet, its understanding (what kind of responsibility?), range (responsible toward whom?), and motivation (why?) are very different. In the perspective of Christian anthropology and ethics, power and responsibility are rooted in God and are derived from him. According to the theological definition of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, power represents man's ability to participate in God's creation. Therefore, the question is not to accumulate as much power as possible, but to dispose of the power that is appropriate for the task and the objectives at every level of action. In the Christian perspective, power is given by God and taken away by God in case of abuse as it is shown in many biblical stories, especially about the kings in the Old Testament. Therefore, to share and to limit power is a valid, important way to avoid its abuse. Power is a loan in the service of the community. The measure of responsibility must be adequate to the measure of power invested in a person or institution, and vice versa. Not only power, but also the burden of responsibilities has to be shared. If it is not shared, people tend to become selfish, autocratic or they feel responsible for everything, even for matters they are unable to influence, and this is almost as destructive as undivided power. Power is tamed by responsibility toward an authority that is above the holder of the power, thereby putting power at the service of humanity. Conversely, it is irresponsible to demand responsibility from somebody without granting him or her the corresponding power.

The motivation for responsible behaviour differs according to different world views and value systems. In a globalised, pluralistic world and a global economy, the motivations are often mixed. This must not necessarily lead to value clashes or to a clash of civilisations, but may result in highly responsible cooperations.

From an enlightened perspective, responsible behaviour is a result of enlightened self-interest. Rational behaviour includes responsibility because irresponsible behaviour is self-destructive and violates the duties toward the community.¹ Self interest and interest of others can be combined and reconciled. Social peace and a healthy environment are equally good for others as for oneself.

¹ Ulrich, Peter (1997): Integrative Wirtschaftsethik. Grundlagen einer lebensdienlichen Ökonomie, Bern: Haupt Verlag.

From a communitarian perspective, the motivation for responsible behaviour results from community-orientation. The wellbeing of the community is the goal of human action. Individual wellbeing depends on wellbeing of the community.²

From a human rights perspective, the care for others and the support of their human rights is an important responsibility of policy makers. But it is also the responsibility of everybody. Obviously, rights are linked to duties and responsibilities.³

From a liberal perspective, personal freedom finds its limitation at the freedom of other fellow human beings. In order to guarantee freedom in the long run, freedom must be linked with responsibility, which respects the freedom of others.⁴

From a socialist perspective, the struggle for justice and equity between all human beings leads to the call for responsibility. Irresponsible use or abuse of power oppresses the poor and weakens the weak. To care for others is a commandment of solidarity.⁵

From a capitalist perspective, the goal of increasing and sustainable profit can – in the long run – only be reached by responsible behaviour. Irresponsible short term profit maximisation increases conflicts with stakeholders, results in negative media reports, legal court cases, and environmental damage, thereby leading to various reputation risks and to corresponding financial damage.⁶

From a religious perspective, one has to act responsibly as a response toward God. All power is with God and is granted to man by God. Therefore man is responsible toward God to use his power for the benefit of the community.

From a Christian perspective the answer to the question, why we should care, is quite simple: because every human being is created in the image of God and God in Christ loves all human being as he loves us. We can find God only when we look in the eyes of our fellow human beings. There we find Christ Jesus. The efforts for personal salvation, personal perfection and wholeness or - in a protestant perspective - the liberation from these efforts by God's grace lead to responsible behaviour.⁷ Re-sponsability is composed of the Latin "re" and "spondere". Spondere, to offer, for the Christian faith means: God offers his covenant. Re-spondere means that human beings respond to this offer by caring for all which is offered by God: life, community and the creation.

2. Figures on Poverty and Wealth

The figures on global development, poverty and wealth, environmental destruction and successes in saving natural resources are known. The "Human Development Report" of UNDP, the World Bank Reports, the alternative "Social Development Report" and others give - on an annual basis - the key figures. I concentrate on a few: about 850 Million people suffer from hunger and go to bed every evening with hunger. Billions live below the poverty line (the number depends on the questionable definition of this line). The unequal distribution of income and wealth increases. The number of billionaires increased from 793 in 2006 to 946 in 2007. Their total wealth grew within one single year 35 per cent up to 3,5 Trillion USD

² Etzioni, Amitai (2004): *From Empire to Community*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

³ Runzo, Joseph et al (eds.) (2003): *Human Rights and Responsibilities in the World Religions*, Exford: One World Publications.

⁴ Stückelberger, Christoph/ Mathwig, Frank (2007): *Grundwerte. Eine theologisch-ethische Perspektive*, Zürich: TVZ, 101-120 (chapter 3.2 on freedom).

⁵ Stückelberger, Christoph (2003): *Global Trade Ethics. An Overview*, Geneva: WCC Publications (available also in French, German, Chinese, 2006).

⁶ Leisinger, Klaus/ Schmitt, Karin M. (2003): *Corporate Ethics in a Time of Globalisation*, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha.

⁷ Stückelberger, Christoph (2007): *Stewards and 'Careholders'. A Christian Ethical Perspective*, in: Stückelberger, Christoph/ Mugambi, J.N.K.: *Responsible Leadership. Global and Contextual Ethical Perspectives*, Geneva: WCC Publications, 3-12.

while the income level of the lower 55 per cent of worlds population stagnated.⁸ The assets of one person, Warren Buffet (US investor) with 28 billion USD corresponded in 1999 the GNP of Vietnam (28.8 billion USD) with 78 million inhabitants. The highest number of billionaires is in Asia (36, 2007) with assets of 191 billion USD, the second highest number in China (20) with 29.4 billion USD.

Billions of children can now go to school, the global illiteracy rate decreased substantially. Billions of women get more rights than in the past. The energy efficiency grew enormously during the last twenty years etc.

For Church statements, it is important to balance figures in order to give a realistic picture: Enormous, never seen progress in material and non material increase of a life in dignity has been reached and should be recognized. But at the same time, too many lives still die and the dimension of environmental disasters has never been seen.

3. See People behind Figures

Figures are important to analyze reality and develop strategies to overcome problems. But many people become lame when they hear such figures. They are too small and feel powerless to contribute to solve such challenges. Therefore, it is one task of the churches to remind that behind figures are people, individual human beings. If one can dry the tears of one child, his/her life makes sense. This action will be statistically insignificant and not yet change the figures, but it contributes to a life in dignity of one human being. And if thousands or millions of people do it, the figures start to change.

4. Move from Globalization to Oikolization

In order to reduce poverty, Churches need a Christian perspective of globalization with its advantages and disadvantages. Globalization first has to be understood in a descriptive way before we proclaim ethical judgments. The literature shows totally different pictures of what globalization is. An Indian Theologian said that globalization started with leaving the paradise and is for him a synonym with all forms of exploitation of human beings by other human beings. Others such as Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker locate the modern form of globalization in the year 1989 with the breakdown of the bi-polar world. Key facts of globalization are the fast growing interdependence of almost all sectors of life and almost all regions in the world.

The ethical value judgment of globalization has to measure, if this development strengthens the implementation of core values or if it weakens it. Therefore, globalization is neither per se positive nor negative. The benchmark is its contribution to human rights and respective values.

“Globalization must be aspired to if it involves an attempt to understand the world as One Mankind and One Ecosystem and their interdependence, and to make it fertile for a dignified life for everyone with a fair share for everyone. - Globalisation must be rejected if it involves an attempt to reduce the world's multiplicity to one standardised economic, cultural and political model, which is created by only a few agents, and in which the economy has priority over any other sphere of life and action.”⁹

Globalization is a secular word which refers to the earth as a globe. From a Christian perspective, the globe is more than a ball. It is the house of God. The Greek term *"oikos"* in the New Testament means house, specifically the world as the common house, the House of

⁸ Petras, James: Global ruling class: Billionaires and how they 'made it', Global research, March 23, 2007,

<http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=viewArticle&code=PET20070323&articleId=5159>.

⁹ Stückelberger, Christoph: Global Trade Ethics. An Overview, Geneva: WCC Publications 2003, chapter 1.8.

God. "*Oikos*" has three topical dimensions for Christian faith, reflected in three important words:

Economy is the responsible husbandry (stewardship) in production, fair distribution and recycling of material goods and services.

Ecology is the responsible use, maintenance and renewal of the natural foundations of life.

Ecumenism is the responsible community of people and peoples with different religions and cultures.

This expresses a basically positive attitude towards the overall view of this planet as "One World", provided that this idea is dealt with responsibility. A Christian term like "oikolization", replacing globalization, could be a program: to remember that the world is Gods house and that humankind has the chance and the duty to use, transform and maintain it again and again as his guesthouse.

5. Change from Free Trade to Fair Trade

As globalization has positive and negative sides, so does liberalization. Economic, political and cultural liberalization increased economic growth in many countries and wealth for millions of people. At the same time, it increased inequality between poor and rich and led many people – e.g. in the agricultural sector - to new poverty because of global competition and forced and too fast opening of markets. Beyond ideologies which defend Neoliberalism as the solution for everything or deny it as the reason and incarnation of all evil in the world, the first step is to critically analyze and acknowledge advantages and disadvantages case by case, country by country, target group by target group. The second step is to use the same value-oriented benchmarks as for globalization: The center of concern must always be the concrete human being and the whole of creation, asking a few simple questions: Does liberalization in a specific sector decrease poverty? How does it increase health? Does it empower people and increase their participation in decision making in society? Does it decrease inequalities? Does it strengthen the protection of creation and the sustainable use of resources? With these questions, free trade cannot mean uncontrolled and unlimited trade. In an ethical perspective, free trade is not a goal in itself. Economy should serve people. Trade should serve people. Free trade has to be replaced by fair trade which includes freedom of exchange of goods and services, but combined with clear ethical regulations regarding social, environmental, cultural and religious impact.¹⁰

6. Combine Aid and Investments

All this does not mean to neglect the meaning of the private sector to overcome poverty, on the contrary. The private sector has a crucial role to play in overcoming poverty. The benchmark "Economy should serve people" means from a biblical perspective, it should first of all serve those in need. A company is not a charity organization. It has to make profit in order to sustainably serve society. But it has to re-invest this profit for the benefit of the needy. Political framework and regulations have to support and where necessary to force the private sector to invest not only where the expected profit is high, but where the need is great.

Success stories such as the microfinance sector shows that investments in the poor are very good and solid investments. I can confirm it as international president of the ecumenical microcredit organization "ECLOF International" for the past eight years. Aid and investments have to be combined in order to bring sustainable human development. Now, with the economic crises in the US and Europe and huge losses in these continents, more and more investors realize that investments in Africa could be worth and not less secure. "Invest in the

¹⁰ See the broad literature on Fair trade, among others of the Ecumenical Advocay Alliance EAA in Geneva: www.e-alliance.org.

poor” in not just an economic public relations slogan. It is the expression of concrete experiences that poor people often behave more carefully with investments than wealthy investors and speculating “players”. The faith-based reason to invest in poor people is God’s offer and promise that he cares for them and invites us to do the same. God’s whole history of salvation is based on poor people who have nothing to offer than their faith in God. They are called “blessed” and “happy” (Mt 5,3).

7. Cry Justice: manage Wealth in favor of the Poor

A certain degree of inequality is the motivation and motor for performance and economic growth, tell us economists and experiences. But too much inequality leads to frustration, social conflicts and death. Equality in the sense of equal rights and equal dignity of all human beings can be combined with some degree of material inequality. But today’s growing gap between poverty and wealth goes far beyond this “balanced inequality”. Until the 1980es the gap between the lowest and the highest salary in a company in the US and Europe was 1 to 40. Today, it is 1 to 550! Today’s top salaries of CEO’s cannot be justified with performance. It is nothing else than unjust and not justifiable.¹¹

Greed has to become a major theme of Church statements, on both levels as individual and as collective greed. The famous saying of Mahatma Gandhi “there is enough for everybody’s need, but not for everybody’s greed” reflects the Christian conviction, that God offers abundance of life for everybody (John 1.15?) but strongly refuses greed and exploitation.

In order to overcome poverty, Churches have more often to deal with the ‘hot potatoe’ called wealth¹². Wealth is not per se negative. It can be transformed to become a blessing if it is invested in justice, peace and the sustainability of creation. That is the social teaching of the Church since the second century¹³. Socially responsible investments (SRI), philanthropy, fair trade, fair wages, fair taxes, nonviolent conflict resolutions etc. are important fields. Many successful examples can be mentioned. The Churches themselves – more and more together on a continental or global level – should further develop respective actions. The action plan for economic justice of the last General Assembly of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches WARC (2004 in Accra) includes many proposals such as to invest at least 20 per cent of the Church investments in ethical investments. The investment fund of the Methodist Church in Great Britain is one of the best examples how far churches can go.

8. Finance the Millenium Development Goals

A new ethical approach to wealth is especially needed in relation to new instruments in financing the UN Millenium Development Goals (MDG’s).¹⁴ These eight goals are ambitious and many people do not believe in its implementation. In order to reach them by 2015, the political will is necessary to redirect public and private expenditures. With this will it is possible to finance them. For the most important MDG 1, the reduction of the number of hungry people from 850 to 400 million people, additional 19 billion USD per year are necessary. For the decade 2005-2015, 190 billion USD are necessary. The war in Irak and in Afghanistan needed 2002-2008 – only for the US budget – 1600 billion USD! If somebody

¹¹ Economic facts and ethical arguments on top salaries see Hoppe, Hella/ Stückelberger, Christoph: Faire Spitzenlöhne? Für mehr Masshaltung und Mitbestimmung, Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, Impulse 3, 2007.

¹² See Taylor, Michael (Hg.): Christianity, Poverty and Wealth. The findings of ‘Project 21’, London/Geneva 2003

¹³ See Gonzalez, Justo, L.: Faith and Wealth. A History of Early Ideas on the Origin, Significance and Use of Money, Eugene 2002.

¹⁴ Atkinson, A.B. (ed.): New Sources of Development Finance, Oxford University Press, New York 2005.

says, the MDG's cannot be financed, is simply wrong. Redirect costs for wars and new arms into poverty reduction is one important instrument to finance the MDG's. There is the close inner connection between peace and poverty issues. But many other financing instruments have been proposed and in details developed. The so called Tobin Tax, a tax on speculative currency transactions, proposed in different models, is one of them.¹⁵ Taxation of carbon combines CO₂-reduction with poverty reduction.

9. Start a Program for Corruption Free Churches

One global obstacle to poverty reduction is corruption. It is defined as the abuse of public or private power for private benefit and interests.¹⁶ The financial losses for development and poverty reduction are enormous. The amount of bribes exceeds – according to some studies – in some countries the total amount of public debts of these countries. The political disaster for transparent democratic developments, the moral effects on the whole society are as disastrous as the financial implications. In many countries, especially in Asia and Africa, churches are also heavily affected - as all sectors of society. But more and more churches start anticorruption programs in order to contribute to a corruption free society and to regain credibility. The All Africa Conference of Churches – after being affected by corruption and decrease of credibility – started under the new and current General Secretary, the South African Methodist Bishop Mvume Dandala – to clean the house with a “social audit” and following decisions. Various African National Councils of Churches now start similar efforts. I recommend that the Methodist Churches by a decision on its global level starts a “Program for Corruption-free Churches” (PCC). I know more Methodist church leaders than from any other denomination who already are involved in fighting corruption. My experience with different churches in the world shows that the Methodists can play a leading role in this effort and become a sign of hope for other Churches.

10. Climate Change: Mourn and engage for an energy ethics beyond oil

The link between poverty reduction and environmental threats are obvious. After the conflict between “development first” as the voice from the South and “environment first” as the voice of the North, today, everybody acknowledges the connection between the two. Today, the emphasis on environmental aspects is even higher in some Southern than in some Northern churches. Climate change is no more a threat for the future but kills lives already now.

The Kyoto Protocol (became effective in 2005) obliges industrial countries to reduce their CO₂ emissions by 5.2 percent compared to 1990 until 2012. But fact is: the worldwide CO₂ emissions increased by 27 percent since 1990.

In order to avoid the climate catastrophe, the worldwide CO₂ emissions must be reduced by 50 percent until 2050. The industrialised countries must reduce the CO₂ emissions by 30 percent until 2030 and 90 percent by 2050!

Three additional goals for the Kyoto Protocol after 2012 should be envisaged: a) Climate goals for industrial countries, but (new) also for countries in transition and developing countries; b) One human – one emission right (every human being has the same human rights – also related to CO₂ emissions); c) MDG 9: Reduction of CO₂ emissions as a contribution to poverty alleviation (proposal of Christian Aid to add this as a ninth UN

¹⁵ See Stueckelberger, Christoph: Global Trade Ethics, WCC publications, Geneva 2003, chapter 6.15.

¹⁶ Stueckelberger, Christoph: Fighting Corruption in and by Churches. An Important Task of Church Leaders, in: Stueckelberger, Christoph/ Mugambi, Jesse: Responsible Leadership, Globethics.net / WCC, Geneva 2007, 184-195. Download: www.globethics.net; Stueckelberger, Christoph: Continue Fighting Corruption. Experiences of Churches and mission societies, Bern 2003. Download: www.christophstueckelberger.ch .

Millennium Development Goal). The Central Committee of the World Council of churches in its meeting from 13-20 February 2008 in Geneva decided a statement "Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change" with recommendations to Churches (see annexe).

The poor are the first victims of the effects of climate change because they do not have the capital to protect themselves from drought, water shortage, storms, economic crises etc. Climate Change is already a reality. Financial and political instruments must be found to finance current (not only future) damages! An ethical principle is: the polluter have to pay. Preventive and curative measures are necessary, but more should be invested in preventive actions.

The key area to reduce CO2 emissions is the energy policy. Many churches published studies on energy ethics in the Seventies and Eighties, but much less during the last ten years, at least in Europe. Churches can contribute in helping people to mourn: we have to acknowledge that the oil area comes to an end. Many still try to deny this fact, but new models of lifestyle and of ways how to organize society, economy, politics, international relations etc. are necessary. Mourning can lead to an openness towards new directions. The Institute for Theology and Ethics of the Federation of Swiss Protestant churches developed – under my supervision – a position paper on a new energy ethics which will be published in spring 2008.¹⁷

11. Develop a Migration Ethics

Increased migration is a result of globalization, open borders, travel facilities, access to media, poverty, wars, ethnic and religious conflicts and environmental deterioration (environmental refugees). Churches do a lot of diaconal work in caring for migrants as asylum seekers, refugees, tourists, forced labor, internally displaced and uprooted people etc. In addition, a migration ethics is necessary which formulates the dignity and human rights of all human beings including migrants and which also expresses the responsibilities and duties of the migrants as well as the emigration and immigration countries.¹⁸ New migration churches and their relation to existing churches in a town or region can become Christian or even interreligious models for the integration of migrants.

12. Unite Justice, peace and integrity of creation

All the former aspects underline the close and inseparable relationship between justice, peace and the integrity of creation. I therefore congratulate the authors of the draft of the text and questionnaire "In Defense of creation" to deal with these three dimensions. The text has to show in every part their interdependence, theologically, economically and politically. The title would have to express all three dimensions. I hope, that the Methodist Churches can decide a strong statement, followed by strong actions. The people are tired of statements and thirst for real change. Changing minds is the first step. Changing behavior is the challenge of the second step. We can do it with the prayer/theme of the last General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre 2006: "God, in your grace, transform the world."

(The text needs corrections before broader distribution or publication)

¹⁷ Download: www.sek.ch.

¹⁸ Kobia, Samuel: conference about global migration as challenge for the Churches, April 2007, to download: <http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?id=3486>; Stückelberger, Christoph: Défis de la migration – pistes éthiques. Conférence à Yaoundé, 2006, to download: www.christophstueckelberger.ch.

Minute on global warming and climate change

Note: this is the provisional wording of statements and minutes that were adopted by Central Committee. Some of the statements might still be subject to slight editings.

“Be stewards of God’s creation!”

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth...God saw all that he had made, and it was very good”

(Genesis 1:1, 31, NIV)

The present minute builds on previous statements of the WCC, especially the statement on the 10th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol, adopted by the WCC executive committee in September 2007.

1. The scriptures affirm that the “earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 26:1, NIV). In Genesis 1:28, God charges humanity to care for the earth by giving humanity “dominion” over it. The word “dominion” is most appropriately translated as “stewardship”, since humanity is not the master of the earth but steward to responsibly care for the integrity of creation. God wondrously and lovingly created a world with more than enough resources to sustain generations upon generations of human beings and other living creatures. But humanity is not always faithful in its stewardship. Mindless production and excessive consumption by individuals, corporations and countries have led to continuous desecration of creation, including global warming and other forms of climate change.
2. Indigenous peoples all over the world continue to live a respectful way of relating with the environment. The sacred nature of the whole creation is also reflected in different indigenous world-views. While looking at the impact of global warming and climate change, the indigenous peoples’ witness provides inspiration and encouragement.
3. Climate change, as the variation in the earth’s global climate or in regional climates over time, and its effects are being experienced already in many regions of the world. Global warming, i.e. the increase in the average temperature of the earth’s near-surface air and oceans, is one of the most evident aspects of climate change. The average temperature of the earth is rising. This creates the melting of ice sheets in Antarctica and Greenland, glaciers, permafrost in mountainous regions and the rising of the average sea level. Rising sea levels are already affecting some countries like Bangladesh in Asia and some islands, particularly in the Pacific. A water crisis brought on by severe droughts and unprecedented floods has resulted in a lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Other effects of climate change are hurricanes, cyclones and typhoons, which are increasing in strength, causing loss of life and destruction of the environment and property. Further consequences of climate change are described in the 2007 “Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report”. Thus, human life and the whole of creation are suffering a new threat. Climate change raises ecological, social, economic, political and ethical issues, and demonstrates the brokenness of relationships between God, humankind and creation.
4. As stated by the “IPCC Report” and other studies, the situation needs urgent mitigation and adaptation measures in order to prevent further adverse consequences of rising temperatures. Mitigation (dealing with the causes) is a must for developed countries that will have to drastically reduce their carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Adaptation (dealing with the impacts) is urgently needed by developing countries to be able to cope with the changes that are happening. Those who are and will increasingly be affected are the impoverished and vulnerable communities of the global South who are much more dependant on natural resources for their subsistence and do not have the means to adapt to the changes. Deforestation in Africa, Asia and Latin America; the increase in vector-borne diseases (like dengue or malaria) in the higher altitude areas of Africa as a result of the increase in temperature; the forced migration, displacement and resettlement of populations as a result of sea level rise, particularly in the Pacific; are some of the impacts that will continue to increase the pressure on poor and vulnerable communities
5. To address the threats the world is facing because of climate change, action must be taken now. In December 2007, at the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Bali, governments agreed on a road map for the negotiation of a new set of commitments under the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol for the post-2012 period. Negotiations are to be concluded by the end of 2009. The United States is now the sole major emitter who has not ratified the Kyoto Protocol. If there is no profound change in life styles, development patterns and the pursuit of economic growth, humanity will not be able to meet the challenge. As the WCC delegation in Bali clearly stressed, “it is our conviction as members of faith communities that a ‘change of paradigm’ from one way of thinking to another is needed if we are to adequately respond to the challenge of climate change”
6. Climate change is both an environmental issue and a matter of justice. Major green house gas (GHG) emitters have a historic responsibility to assume, to stop and to reverse the current trend. Developing countries, while looking for better conditions for their people, face a dilemma which should be confronted in looking for ways not to repeat the path that led to the present situation. The current unsustainable production and consumption patterns have caused tremendous negative effects in the environment and generated what has been called an ecological debt towards humanity and the earth. This ecological debt can be analyzed in relation to the financial debt. To reverse this trend it becomes crucial to look for technologies and practices both to mitigate and adapt, especially responding to the needs of vulnerable communities
7. Churches and religious communities can take key leadership roles in addressing global warming and climate change concerns to individuals, communities and governments. The question we must pose is whether we can rise together to meet this unprecedented opportunity. Churches and religious communities, for example, must find ways to challenge and motivate each other to measure our ecological and economic “footprints” and to follow through by making lasting changes in lifestyles and economic pursuits. Church members have to take responsibility for paying their share of the ecological debt that looms large in the years ahead. Christians should practice “life in all its fullness” (John 10:10) in the face of a modern materialism that has now been globalized. Steps such as these will be a testimony which could permeate societies and be a catalyst for much-needed change
8. As the effects of global warming can lead to conflict between populations competing over resulted scarce resources, WCC member churches’ actions with regards to climate change should also be seen in relationship with the Decade to Overcome Violence and the lead-up to the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, scheduled to take place in 2011. The theme of the convocation, “Glory to God and Peace on Earth”, highlights peace on earth, which should include peace with the earth as well as peace among human beings
9. Many churches, ecumenical organizations and specialized ministries have already started to take action concerning climate change and global warming. The Ecumenical Patriarch has played a leadership role advocating for the care of creation,

involving the scientific community, including its concerns in education curricula and calling, on 1 September 1989, to observe September 1st (the beginning of the liturgical year in the Orthodox Church) as creation day. This call was reiterated by the Third European Ecumenical Assembly, meeting in Romania in September 2007. Also in September 2007, the 9th assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches called on the churches in the Pacific to advocate for "a regional immigration policy giving citizens of countries most affected by climate change (...) rights to resettlement in other Pacific island nations", and on the global ecumenical family to support this initiative. Forty years after the WCC Uppsala assembly, the Church of Sweden is organizing in Uppsala an inter-religious summit on climate change in November 2008.

The central committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 13-20 February 2008:

- A. **Urgently calls** the churches to strengthen their moral stand in relationship to global warming and climate change, recalling its adverse effects on poor and vulnerable communities in various parts of the world, and encourages the churches to reinforce their advocacy towards governments, NGOs, the scientific community and the business sector to intensify cooperation in response to global warming and climate change;
- B. **Calls for** a profound change in the relationship towards nature, economic policies, consumption, production and technological patterns. This change is based on the commitment of Christian communities and institutions, including the WCC, which should strengthen the work of the Ecumenical Centre Ecology Group to continue implementing ecological practices in the Ecumenical Centre;
- C. **Encourages** member churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical partners to:
- a. share and further develop creative ways of practicing ecologically respectful relationships within the human community and with the earth;
 - b. share knowledge and affordable technology that promote environmentally friendly lifestyles;
 - c. monitor the ecological footprints of individuals, parishes, corporations and states and take other steps to mitigate climate change and global warming;
- D. **Urges** member churches to observe through prayers and action a special time for creation, its care and stewardship, starting on September 1st every year, to advocate for the plight of people and communities of the Pacific, especially in the low lying atolls of Kiribati and Tuvalu, and to find specific ways to show our ecumenical solidarity with those most at risk;
- E. **Requests** theological schools, seminaries and academies to teach stewardship of all creation in order to deepen the ethical and theological understanding of the causes of global warming and climate change and of the sustainable lifestyle that is needed as a response;
- F. **Promotes** the exploration of inter-religious and inter-cultural avenues for cooperation and constructive response, such as the inter-religious summit planned by the Church of Sweden, ensuring a better stewardship of creation and a common witness through concrete actions.