



SOUTHERN AFRICAN FAITH COMMUNITIES' ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE (SAFCEI)

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“Faith communities committed to cherishing living earth.”

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SAFCEI Statement for the 2009 Climate Change Summit

For members of southern African Faith Communities, the overriding priority is the health of the planet. As people of faith we believe we have been given custodianship and have a moral responsibility to pass the planet on to our children in a healthier state than we found it. All our sacred texts call on us to care for, protect and sustain nature as we seek justice and peace among ourselves. Our burning of fossil fuels and our destruction of forests, grasslands, oceans and other ecosystems, is placing the well-being of future generations of all life in jeopardy.

We have come to realise that climate change is taking place far more rapidly than has been acknowledged. We therefore believe we cannot wait till 2020 to peak our carbon emissions. We believe that process has to happen with immediate effect. We have the technical means to do so, while at the same time generating the energy our contemporary society has come to expect. We must develop the political will to bring about change.

With the development of Concentrated Solar Power and thermal batteries, and with low voltage Direct Current transmission, we are in a position to start harnessing the greatest source of power, namely the sun. South Africa has been singularly blessed with solar resources. We should implement such generation with immediate effect.

We therefore call on the Government to halt any further development of coal powered and nuclear generation and build clean, renewable energy generating plants as a matter of urgency. We know too that the construction time is far shorter than for coal or nuclear. We also know that in developing renewable energy, we will generate far more employment.

We call on the government to be resolute in overcoming the vested interests of the fossil fuel and nuclear energy industries. Even if – initially – costs for renewables are higher than conventional coal generation, we believe the future health of the planet cannot be held to ransom by financial considerations. There is no price too high for the future survival of our children and life on this planet. We therefore call, not just for subsidies, but massive investment in renewable energy.

All countries will have to reduce greenhouse gases in the future. Even if other countries are reluctant to reduce their emissions now, we believe that South Africa must be bold and set an example to the world. If we do this we will be in the position to take a lead in the development of renewable energy. This will be a source of great employment in the future.

At the recent *Summit of religious leaders for a sustainable future*, we adopted the following resolution on climate change:

Southern African Faith Communities' Environment Institute and Indalo Yethu

National Summit
Religious leaders for a sustainable future

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY RESOLUTION

We, members of faith communities of southern Africa, recognise that the burning of fossil fuels is causing a greenhouse effect leading to dramatic climate change which could have catastrophic consequences for the future of life on this planet.

We also recognise that communities of Africa are particularly vulnerable to climate change. We need to address this and we urge the South African Government to continue to play a leadership role both regionally and internationally, notably at Copenhagen at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2009. We faith communities strongly express our concern and our position to the government delegation of the need for meaningful action in order to ensure that the meeting in Copenhagen results in positive and significant progress.

We also recognise the need for urgency to reduce greenhouse gases. We, people of faith, recognise that we have a responsibility to care for the planet and all life on it as well as caring for our fellow human beings.

We furthermore recognise that this responsibility includes leaving a healthy planet for future generations so that they are not robbed of their inheritance.

Part of our role as faith communities is to engage with leadership, including government leadership. Acknowledging positive steps that the South African Government has taken to address energy and climate change issues, we call on the governments of southern Africa to earnestly work with civil society. In turn we commit ourselves to working with our respective governments and other leaders in seeking to ensure that the following resolutions are attended to and acted upon. We therefore:

1. Call on the governments of southern Africa to take on concrete, measurable steps to reduce carbon emissions. This means stopping the expansion of further coal and nuclear generation, and progressively moving away from fossil fuels and nuclear generation towards the increasing development of renewable energy, concentrating on solar and wind, as a matter of urgency. This could be greatly encouraged through the urgent implementation of the feed in tariff.
2. Call on the Government of South Africa to set before the world community, a CO_2 emissions reduction target so that the levels of atmospheric green house gases are reduced to below 350 ppm (as a more practical and measurable target than keeping temperatures below a $2^{\circ}C$ increase).
3. Call on both Government and civil society to assist vulnerable communities to develop indigenous and local models of adaptation in order to meet the impacts of climate change.
4. Call on Government to ensure resources are provided for creative and innovative communication and capacity building, as part of a broader commitment to democracy and participatory learning around issues of climate change. This must focus on positive messages of hope that will motivate and inspire all stakeholders.

5. Call on Government, ESKOM and NERSA (National Energy Regulator of South Africa) to ensure that electricity tariffs include 'cradle to grave' external environmental and social costs. A stepped tariff must be implemented so that the poor are not further burdened by increasing electricity tariffs. Renewable, locally generated electricity provides the opportunity for access to affordable electricity for all.
6. Call for the improvement and shifting of freight from road to railway, setting a target of 40% road freight to be transported by rail by 2020. Call for the improvement and subsidisation of safe, efficient public transport, in particular railways, and encourage and incentivise the public to use it. Implement measurable targets, for example, 20% of private road commuters to shift to using public transport by 2012.
7. Call for Government to establish and support local innovative technologies to drive new economic sectors such as renewable energy. Such sectors must focus on local job creation, for example, electric vehicles and the generation of electricity by renewable means. The arms industry must be transformed into a renewable energy industry.
8. Call on the Government to end the policy of enticing polluting industries, such as smelters, to our country with the promise of heavily subsidized "cheap" electricity. Equity must be pursued in that industrial users must not pay less for energy than households.
9. Acknowledging how critical the supply of energy has become, we call on the Government to ensure that all government departments work cooperatively on climate change, through an interdepartmental presidential task team. We also call on Government to create a separate ministry of energy.
10. Broadly endorse *Hope for the future*, the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto issued by the Archbishop of Sweden in November 2008 in which faith traditions address global warming, (attached). We commit ourselves to sharing the contents with our faith communities and working towards strengthening the voice of faith communities at Copenhagen.
11. Call on faith communities to take a lead and set an example by implementing energy efficient measures as models of good practice, encouraging their members and the public to do the same. Energy efficiency targets (25% by 2020) must be implemented as a matter of extreme urgency.

12 February 2009

Furthermore, at the international level, we support the Archbishop of Sweden's call following his Interfaith workshop in November 2008 for steps that must be taken at the UNFCCC meeting in December 2009.

"The Copenhagen Agreement must counteract misuse of land, of forests, and of farmland, using creative incentives for landowners, users and indigenous communities to manage growing forests as carbon sinks.
We ask the global political leadership for:

- **Rapid and large emission cuts in the rich world.** Developed countries, especially those in Europe and North America, must lead the way. In the

developed countries emissions should be reduced by at least 40 per cent by 2020 and 90 per cent by 2050 against 1990 levels.

- **Binding cuts for the rich world on top of their domestic obligations.** According to the principles of responsibility and capability countries should pay for *international* cuts in addition to their own *domestic* initiatives. These payments should be obligatory, rather than voluntary.
- **Measurable, verifiable and reportable mitigation actions by developing countries,** especially countries with fast growing economies.
- **Massive transfers and sharing of important technology.** All countries must encourage and facilitate the sharing of technology that is intrinsically important to reducing emissions. Developing countries must have viable and technologically responsible opportunities to provide for their populations.
- **Economic incentives for developing countries** to foster cleaner development on a national scale.
- **Adaptation to climate change.** According to the same principles of responsibility and capability, countries must ensure that poor and vulnerable communities are empowered and supported. Adaptation to climate change must not fail for want of money or other resources.”

(DEAT Climate Summit statement)