

## **FOR A MORE JUST AND SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW**

### **MESSAGE FROM A CEC CONSULTATION ON PILGRIMAGE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE AND THE UN CLIMATE CONFERENCE IN PARIS, NOVEMBER 2015**

*Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times (Psalm 106,3)*

As members of different CEC member churches, 50 leaders and participants in the pilgrimages for climate justice across the continent we met in Schwerte, Germany from 12 to 14 October 2015. We reflected on climate change and the forthcoming Paris Summit from a faith perspective and in an ecumenical spirit.

Climate change constitutes, together with mass poverty, is one of the most urgent challenges that the world is facing today. The effects of climate change are already being experienced primarily in more vulnerable communities and countries. It is of the utmost urgency that we cut our human carbon emissions and strengthen resilience of the most vulnerable communities if we are to avoid destroying the ability of God's good earth to sustain life in full abundance.

In this situation our churches uphold their voices reminding us of our mutual responsibility for one another, including future generations. God calls us to act justly and develop ways of living for a more sustainable world. *Justice, and only justice, shall you pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you,* (Deuteronomy 16,20). We are encouraged to protect the weak and pass on a positive legacy to our children's children.

From our diverse backgrounds we met with pilgrims who are walking from their home countries to Paris and were inspired by their commitment to demonstrate hope and seeking lifestyles that challenge the ways we currently produce and consume in our society. From our experience, we strongly believe that our entire lives need to be transformed and upheld by values of solidarity and sustainability in today's world.

The Pilgrimage is a way to raise awareness that climate change is about our way of thinking and living together and about our faith. We are all on a pilgrimage that is an Exodus from the Carbon Economy. We journey together with the climate refugees and migrants and for the right of the coming generations to a life of wellbeing on a sustainable earth. The pilgrimage is not only a way to express concerns for the future but also a hope for a future where we will live in freedom, peace and justice as part of the whole of Creation.

We take note of the scientific view as presented in the 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report of the IPCC, that in order to limit global warming to well below a 2 degree rise in temperature urgent action is necessary, and we therefore call upon our political leaders to act urgently for a more sustainable future.

#### **EUROPEAN LEADERSHIP FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

We call on policy makers to work together to look beyond short-term actions and take lasting decisions for the common good. Agreement at the Paris conference and beyond will only happen by putting aside our various private interests and focusing on this challenge which we can only solve all together. The EU is the second largest emitter of accumulated, as well as consumption-based, current greenhouse gases. Therefore, we have an historical and present responsibility for addressing that which threatens life on our common home planet.

We especially call on the EU political leaders to step up efforts to overcome divisions between developed and developing countries, by contributing a fair share of global efforts and by providing meaningful financial, technical and legal support to the poorest and most vulnerable

countries. These countries are already facing adaptation challenges and deadly losses and damages.

We particularly call on our governments to undertake long-term action in developing measures for inspiring and engaging its citizens. Climate change policies must not be targeted only at industrial and land-use activities. Climate change is a result of a mind-set that demands an ever increasing consumption in our households and individual lives. This drive has to be addressed at its grassroots level and not just dealing with the consequences. Although science and technology play a significant role in responding to climate change, relying on them alone will not be sufficient. Addressing ethical issues, educating and involving people are “musts” in climate programmes.

**CLIMATE ACTION MUST NOT BE LIMITED TO GOVERNMENTS ALONE. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL OF US TO SHARE THE EFFORTS.**

**WE INVITE CHURCHES IN EUROPE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH FAITH COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE, TO COMMIT TO:**

- Follow the example set by faith based communities who are joining the global pilgrimage for climate justice<sup>1</sup> and those participating in regular acts of fasting for climate justice.<sup>2</sup>
- Be responsible for the Earth, our common home, in our lives as individuals and in our faith communities.
- Look at our consumption patterns and move towards sustainable practices and lifestyles, assessing the carbon footprints of our organizations and institutions as well as a means to reduce them, explore and implement zero carbon strategies, and where appropriate, divest from fossil fuels.
- Assess climate risks affecting our communities, prepare for the prevention and reduction of these risks, encourage communities to set climate resilience targets by 2025 and take the actions needed to adapt to the impact of climate change.
- Undertake constant efforts to raise climate awareness within our communities, as an expression of our care for the Earth, deepening our understanding of the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, building capacity, and advocating for climate justice with our governments.

---

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/pilgrims-for-climate-justice-plan-to-impact-cop-21-in-paris?set\\_language=en](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/pilgrims-for-climate-justice-plan-to-impact-cop-21-in-paris?set_language=en)

<sup>2</sup> <http://fastfortheclimate.org/>