

Global Evangelical Leaders Welcome Paris Climate Agreement as Historical Accomplishment

As leading evangelicals engaged in addressing the issues of poverty, creation care and climate change, **we welcome the Paris Agreement** signed on Saturday 12 December 2015. For the first time in history, the world has a global climate change deal where almost every nation on earth has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and has agreed to pursue efforts to keep global average temperature rise below 1.5 degrees C.

Christians and other people of faith have been a central part of the movement to push for a strong agreement. A Senior US State Department Official says, *"the faith community has been essential in making the case that confronting climate change is our moral responsibility. The Christian community has led that effort, helping to push for a strong agreement that protects vulnerable and threatened communities."* At the Paris talks, senior church leaders from around the globe and across Christian traditions joined other faith leaders to call for action and for **recognition of the moral dimension of climate change.**

The global evangelical Christian community was represented by Bp Efraim Tendero, Secretary General of the *World Evangelical Alliance* that serves over 600 million evangelicals in 129 countries. Speaking from Paris, Bp Tendero – himself from the Philippines, one of the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – said: *"There is a moral component to the whole discussion of climate change. The decision to reduce our carbon footprint is rooted in the ethical foundation that human life needs to be protected and nurtured. Shifting to renewable sources of energy over against the harmful fossil-based energy is not only a scientific endeavor, but an ethical action that seeks the long-term survival and well-being of humanity."*

Other evangelical organizations and groups represented included the *Lausanne Creation Care Network*, Christian development and environmental organisations *Tearfund* and *A Rocha International*, and many others.

Rev. Ed Brown, Lausanne Senior Associate for Creation Care, commented that *"What is most remarkable to me is that the global evangelical community spoke with a strong voice at a COP meeting for the first time, and that government delegations listened to us, and to the other faith communities. Because of this, the climate conversation has permanently shifted from merely economics and politics to include morality. This had to happen, and it has."*

"It was thrilling to be in Paris during COP21," says Rev. Dave Bookless, A Rocha International's Director of Theology. *"As we return to our own countries and organisations, we do so united in our commitment to see justice for all God's people, and good news for all God's creation."*

The Paris Agreement is not perfect. The governments of the world have committed to keeping the rise in the global average temperature to "well below 2 degrees" and to "pursue efforts" to limit it to 1.5 degrees – establishing 1.5 degrees as a new target. However, the emissions reductions nations have committed to in Paris only reduce warming from the projected 4 degrees of 'business as usual' to 2.7 degrees, still far too high to prevent global catastrophe. We therefore commit to continuing to engage with this process, by mobilizing Christians around the world to keep on praying, acting and applying pressure until this goal is truly met.

We recognise that the Paris accord is merely the start, not the end, of the process of effectively tackling global climate change. "We welcome the agreement brokered at these crucial climate talks," says Paul Cook, Tearfund's Advocacy Director. "This is a good step forward, but let's not be complacent. This doesn't give us everything we need...Christians around the world will be praying that governments will accept their responsibilities, challenging them to do so, and celebrating with them when they do take the bold action required."

Alongside these actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions we welcome the reaffirmation by the world's richest countries to provide US\$100 billion in climate finance per year from 2020 to help the world's poorest communities (for whom we have a particular concern). These funds will help developing countries to adapt to the impact of climate change and transition to clean energy themselves. However, we note that the world's richest nations are currently still a long way off delivering this commitment in reality. We therefore commit to continuing to challenge them and working with them to see these funds truly start to flow and we will hold them to account to continue to provide their fair share beyond 2025.

As evangelical leaders, we commit to bringing the Paris Agreement home to the countries where we are represented all around the world, and to play our part in celebrating and promoting it, in working for its implementation and delivery, and in challenging governments and world leaders in the months and years ahead to strengthen it in the ways still needed. We also commit to supporting and engaging with other national and global processes which promote care for God's creation and love for our neighbours suffering the impacts of environmental degradation such as the Habitat III conference in October 2016.

We will never stop speaking out and engaging the evangelical constituency with these critical issues until humanity's relationship with God's creation has truly returned to one of balance and restored relationships, that God intended and the Bible sets out.

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