



STATEMENT ON COP 28'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5:24)

As 2023 draws towards its close, climate scientists are projecting that this year will break all previous records of global warming, and will prove to have been the hottest year in the past 125,000 years. The climate crisis, driven by greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, is accelerating much faster than climate science models had predicted. Every part of the planet is being affected, with exceptional heatwaves, wildfires, droughts and desertification, severe storms and flooding, and other extreme weather events becoming the 'new normal', and providing damning evidence of humanity's catastrophic stewardship of God's creation.

In Nigeria - itself an oil-producing nation - where the executive committee of the World Council of Churches is meeting, climate change presents a major and present threat, as it does throughout the African continent. As a recent report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has observed, Africa is responsible for only a fraction of global greenhouse gas emissions but is suffering disproportionately from climate change, harming food security, ecosystems and economies, fuelling displacement and migration and worsening the threat of conflict over dwindling resources.¹ At the same time, the executive committee:

- **affirms and celebrates** African leadership for climate justice, expressed for example through the Africa Climate Summit, and through the work of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC).
- **appeals** for a *metanoia* – a transformative change of heart and lifestyle – in the region, and globally, away from the destructive and exploitative fossil fuel economy and towards sustainability and justice, and for the wealthy countries that have gained the most from the fossil fuel economy to contribute the most to support more vulnerable low income countries in making that transition

Humanity is rapidly reaching the limit of how much additional carbon can be emitted into the atmosphere before accelerating irreversibly past the safer limit of 1.5°C agreed at COP 21 in Paris in 2015. Recent studies indicate that if global emissions continue at current levels, the remaining 'carbon budget' for keeping to that limit will be expended in just six years. Beyond that limit, damages, risks and the likelihood of exceeding physical and ecological tipping points increase sharply. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) advises that emissions must peak by 2025 and fall rapidly thereafter if global warming is to be kept within safer boundaries.

Meanwhile, richer countries whose wealth has been built on the fossil fuel economy are backpedalling on their own reduction commitments, and even investing in new fossil fuel exploration and development, while failing to recognize our global inter-connectedness and continuing to resist the demands for justice for more vulnerable and low income nations and

¹ The State of the Climate in Africa 2022, World Meteorological Organization: <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate/Africa-2022>

communities, who are least responsible for this global crisis, but who are already suffering its worst effects.

This is the context in which the 28th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) will take place towards the end of this year in the United Arab Emirates – the world's seventh biggest oil producer with the fifth largest gas reserves. At this time of climate emergency, it is essential that COP28 courageously addresses the fossil fuel industry and their responsibility towards people and planet.

COP28 is pivotal for the future of the living planet², our common home, and for our children and future generations. It concludes the first Global Stocktake (GST) to evaluate “*collective progress towards achieving the purpose of [the [Paris Agreement](#) and its long-term goals*” with a view to boosting countries’ commitments and plans as well as international cooperation for climate action.

The GST Technical Report released in September 2023 underlines that, even with perfect implementation of current national commitments and climate policies, the world is on a trajectory towards global warming of 2.7° C above pre-industrial levels - almost twice the 1.5°C limit - with calamitous consequences. The science is crystal clear: any new fossil fuel development is incompatible with the Paris goals. Fossil fuels must be phased out urgently, renewable energy scaled up, and forests, land and oceans protected and restored. Meanwhile, climate justice must be rendered to more vulnerable and low income nations and communities, to address the loss and damage they have already suffered, and to support them in adapting to future climate change impacts and to join equitably in the ‘green transition’ to a renewable energy economy.

We recall the WCC 11th Assembly Statement titled, “The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community”, which underlines that “Christ’s love calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who have contributed to this emergency the least, yet suffer the most, physically, existentially, and ecologically, through a transformation of systems and lifestyles” and that “wealthy nations responsible for the bulk of emissions must take the lead in reducing their own emissions and in financing emission reductions in poorer nations.”

The executive committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, from 8 to 14 November 2023:

Affirms our belief in a God of justice that will “*let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream*” (Amos 5:24), and that as Christians, we are obliged to act for justice.

Calls on all governments to act now on phasing out fossil fuels which account for 75% of greenhouse gas emissions. This means:

- Ending fossil fuel subsidies, halting new extraction of fossil fuels, and urgently phasing out existing fossil fuel sources;
- Committing to a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty as endorsed by the WCC central committee in June 2023;

² WCC 11th Assembly Statement : “[The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community](#)”

- Providing financing for more vulnerable and low income nations for loss and damage, for climate change adaptation, and for the transition to a renewable energy based economy; and
- Acting for a just transition that protects the rights of Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable groups as well as ensuring that no worker, community or country is left behind.

Calls on COP28 to:

- Rise above the current conflicts, confrontations and divisions in the international community, and act collectively to address the urgent existential threat of climate change as a matter of fundamental moral responsibility to the current and all future generations of life on earth.
- Ramp up Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) with a view to keeping global warming to not more than 1.5° C in accordance with the Paris Agreement commitments.
- Make operational as soon as possible the Loss and Damage Fund established at COP27 in view of accelerating climate impacts. This means ensuring new, additional, adequate and predictable funding for economic and non-economic losses and damages experienced mainly by more vulnerable and low income countries which is expected to reach \$150-300 billion a year by 2030. Such funds must be made accessible to climate-impacted communities.
- Rapidly deliver climate finance that gives climate-vulnerable nations and communities a chance to adapt to the consequences of climate change. At a minimum, this COP must live up to the promise of providing 100 billion dollars per year for the Green Climate Fund. Such finance must be needs-based, at the scale required, and in the form of grants rather than loans.

Urges member churches, ecumenical partners, and all people of good will to:

- Pray and appeal for leaders gathering for COP 28 to act resolutely and with the necessary urgency to address the gravity of the threat posed by the escalating climate crisis;
- Support young people in their efforts to protect their future and to ensure a sustainable living planet, including advocating against measures that criminalize or excessively punish those who participate in non-violent demonstrations for climate action and climate justice;
- Support the claims of more vulnerable and low income nations and communities for climate reparations for loss and damage;
- Promote the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty;
- Exercise their power as consumers to demand that their banks and other financial service providers divest from fossil fuel industries, and invest in renewable energy industries, as a moral imperative for our children's future.
- 'Walk the talk', making the necessary lifestyle changes and taking the actions required for a sustainable future for all.

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