

ECEN Report

Consultation on Climate Change, 12-14 October 2009, Lund, Sweden

The consultation, organised by ECEN, was attended by some 25 persons, many of them members of ECEN. There was high level representation from the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Council of European RC Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), and from the Conference of European Churches (CEC).

A full participants list can be obtained at the ECEN Secretariat.

Aims of the meeting were:

- To offer an update on European churches' activities regarding climate change;
- To share information about the UN meeting in Copenhagen (COP 15), and the process leading towards it, clarifying expectations and possible follow up actions;
- To discuss a specific contribution of the churches' work responding to the challenge of climate change, including theological and ethical motivation, the role of education and the need for lifestyle change;
- To strengthen the communication between different initiatives of churches in Europe;
- To strengthen cooperation between CEC member churches and CCEE in their work on environment;
- A joint celebration of Creation Time.

Important outcomes of the meeting are:

- A joint letter on climate change by CCEE and CEC, that will be sent shortly to all member churches and RC bishops' conferences, with a recommendation to disseminate the (adapted) letter to the church public.
- The recommendation to ECEN to support the movement and network of 'green' churches, or eco-congregations, with a webforum, consultancy pages and liturgy on the website, a newsletter etc.

Churches and environment

Creation Time

Participants shared best practices regarding the celebration of Creation Time. Some countries and churches follow the call of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and ECEN to have celebrations from 1 September – 4 October. In the UK Creation Time is taken up by the Church of England, and supported and advocated by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI). In Denmark and the Netherlands things are slowly starting with grassroots initiatives, but acceptance by church leadership is difficult. In Germany the traditional harvest day is followed. In Italy the RCC had a celebration in Asisi. Some other countries and churches have celebrations in the summer, following UN Environment Day (5 June), notably Hungary and Finland. Also in Australia there is attention for the issue: in December there will be a presentation on Creation Time celebration at the Parliament of World Religions in Melbourne.

So on the whole progress has been made.

It was recommended to link related themes such as lifestyle and production and consumption patterns with the celebration of Creation Time. Participants were positive about the yearly ECEN liturgical material. This is generally used, although it often needs adaptation and translation according to national and denominational contexts. Therefore it was recommended to broaden the liturgical pool on the ECEN website, instead of producing a finalised liturgy each year.

In the evening of October 12 participants enjoyed a joint celebration of Creation Time in the Lund cathedral.

Theology

Former Archbishop of Sweden Hammar gave an analysis of the environmental crisis from a theological perspective. We need to re-interpret tradition continuously as life goes on, and we need to ask ourselves what we leave for the future. Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion in the world and therefore helped to cause the current crisis. Theological renewal is in order. We have to consider issues of justice and sustainable development. We need to set other priorities, resist shallow consumerism, and ask ourselves how to spend our money and our lifetime. Cooperation with other religions and the secular world is necessary in order to tackle the problems and establish a culture of hope.

Lifestyle

The discussion on consumerism that followed revealed that this is deeply rooted in our societies, linked to a false belief in 'eternal life', the notion that 'you are what you have' etc. The churches should try to find a way out of this 'Babylonian imprisonment', caused by evergrowing need and greed created by industry. We have to look for and develop a Christian lifestyle, based on hope and vision and the notion that the most important things in life are for free. Unfortunately reality is different so far: many churches are reluctant to touch on the issue of lifestyle (C. and E. Europe) or even give blessings to shopping malls in developing countries (as one participant reported, who works in the Philippines, see further below).

International climate politics / COP 15

Negotiations

Several presentations from the side of ECEN, CEC and WCC gave insight in the current state of international climate politics. After the latest rounds in the international negotiations (Bonn, Bangkok), hopes are not high that COP 15 will indeed deliver a good new climate treaty. Main obstacles are the situation in the USA and a general lack of trust between countries. In the USA the lower chamber of the Congress, the House of Representatives, has already adopted new climate legislation, but the Senate has not. Unless this is done before COP 15, chances are the USA will not come up with clear targets and timeframes in Copenhagen. The European Union has made it clear it wants the USA on board a new treaty, and therefore has left an impression that it might want to abandon the Kyoto Protocol as leading treaty for the next future. This is not well received by developing countries, as they have no obligations for emissions reduction yet under the KP (as non-Annex 1 countries). The USA on its turn has repeatedly said it will only commit to a treaty if the developing countries are obliged to cut emissions as well. Note that China, India, Brazil, Mexico a.o. are amongst those countries. In the mean time several countries including Japan, China and Norway have announced emissions reductions, with or without clear targets and timeframes. Hanging over the negotiations as a dark cloud is the mistrust of developing countries as a whole: they claim more money for adaptation and development, pointing out that the industrial world is to blame for the climate crisis and should therefore bear the burden. So far the financial promises of the rich world are not even close to what is asked for and – according to independent research – needed. And then there is the long-time experience of the developing world that financial promises very often are not being fulfilled.

In general, at this point of time the outlook for COP 15 is not hopeful. There is still one week of preparatory negotiations on the agenda: 2-6 November in Barcelona. Before that the European Council will have an important meeting 29-30 October.

Climate change and large church organisations

Considering the latest state of affairs the question is whether no treaty in Copenhagen would be better than a bad treaty. In any case churches and church-based development agencies are doing their best to influence developments in a positive way. In its recent position statement Aprodev (the umbrella organisation of WCC-linked development agencies) advocates 40% reduction in 2020, see www.aprodev.net. The WCC Secretary General Sam Kobia sent a letter to the member churches on 4 September. Furthermore the African and Pacific Councils of Churches have strong climate programmes with a focus on climate refugees. For the WCC climate change is a holistic issue, that encompasses the

environment, politics, economics, cultural and social issues. The leading principle in its work is climate *justice*, which requires conversion of all, also the global South. The South should adapt its ideal for development, and no longer seek to imitate the North. In short the concept of 'growth' needs to be changed, focussing on 'work for life', sharing, the Green Deal, working together with the civil movement. The notion of per capita emission rights is essential, also with regard to the official negotiations. See www.oikoumene.org/climatechange

The Pope's *Caritas in Veritate* issued last June contains a lot of text about environment. The Pope insists that ecology is about morality and ethics; human ecology, natural ecology, doctrine and mentality need to be announced and shared. Also there is the insight that peace begins with taking care of creation. The Pope wants COP 15 to be a success. He sent a short film message to the UN climate summit on 22 September in New York and had solar panels placed on Vatican roofs.

Some 500 evangelical and small protestant church relief agencies from 81 countries, united under the umbrella of the Micah Network, are working on climate change. The 3rd conference of the Network in Kenya this summer delivered a Statement on Climate Change, and a letter to the UN Special Summit on climate change in New York, 22 September, also advocating 40 % reduction in 2020. See www.micahnetwork.org

Church calendar at COP 15

The Ecumenical COP 15 Secretariat highlighted the state of preparations of COP 15. Hotels are fully booked, it is now virtually impossible to still find a place to stay, although the Secretariat might be able to make contact with people who might help out. See also www.newlifecopenhagen.org

The Danish authorities are anxious that things might get out of hand, as large demonstrations with tens of thousands of people are foreseen.

A calendar:

12 December 1 - 6 p.m.: joint civil society demonstration or Climate March: 'Planet First – People First', walk of 7 km to the Bella Centre where the negotiations are held. Many participants are expected, including from WCC/Aprodev (the Countdown to Copenhagen Campaign), Oxfam, WWF, Friends of the Earth etc. The March is not a demonstration against the COP.

See www.12dec09.dk

13 December:

11.30 – 12.30h Countdown Handover Event in Town Hall Square, Desmond Tutu will hand over the signatures of the Countdown to Copenhagen Campaign to the Secretary General of the UN, Ban Ki-Moon, or another UN official.

NOTA BENE: The Countdown to Copenhagen Campaign now has 90,000 signatures, but this should be at least 250,000. All ECEN members and church public can sign, see www.countdowntocopenhagen.org
Also national websites can be used.

14 – 15 h: Ecumenical Service in English. A melting ice bear will stand in front of the Cathedral. Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams will preach, there will be contributions from the Pacific, Malawi, Greenland. It will be a high level event with church leaders, political leaders, the Danish Queen Margrethe II etc. A large screen will be put in place for everyone to watch. The service will be broadcasted directly on Danish National TV and possibly by Eurovision. Also a link to the online transmission on the website of Danish National Television will be put on the Countdown to Copenhagen website and/or www.bellringing350.org

15 h: following the service, the international bellringing event will take place: all churches are to ring their bells 350 times at 15 hours local time. The WCC endorses the campaign and has received information from churches in a.o. Australia, Spain that they will go forward with the action. For some countries it might be difficult to engage in the action, also for political reasons, but in that case instead noise can be made with other items than church bells.

Please register your action on the international website www.bellringing350.org!

There will be informal engagement as well, with 4 Franciscan friars from the UK, hosting a seminar every evening.

14 December:

Morning: a theological climate seminar will be held (to be confirmed). The WCC invited several theologians from different world areas. Afterwards there is a VIP lunch hosted by the Ecumenical Committee of Copenhagen, followed by visits to local churches in Copenhagen.

15 December:

Church officials are to visit the Bella Centre and meet with key negotiators. An interfaith side event by WCC and Caritas International will take place (to be confirmed).

Later in the week:

The traditional address to the COP Plenary by WCC. Both departing and new SG will be present in Copenhagen.

Further (church) activities in Copenhagen

- Photo exhibition on Cathedral Square: Climate Change in East Africa
- Climate Refugee Camp 9 – 11 Dec. with volunteers from DanChurch Aid
- Installation about emissions by Danish architect school
- Clock Suits: collection of signatures for the Countdown to Copenhagen Campaign during the first week of negotiations.
- A wake up call with night gowns... and more!

Interfaith activities

are not organised by Ecumenical Climate Secretariat, but the Danish Council of Churches keeps track. So far known:

- a faith pilgrimage on Friday Dec. 11 in the late evening;
- a visit to three places of worship (Christian, Muslim, Jewish): each place will host a little ceremony;
- an interfaith celebration on Dec. 10 at Gustafskyrkan, the Swedish Church in Copenhagen. For information contact: Ann-Cathrin.Jarl@svenskakyrkan.se

Climate Forum

The Climate Forum, www.klimaforum09.dk is the global civil society counterpart of the official UN conference. There will be stands, exhibitions, workshops etc. in the Bella Centre. Also WCC/Aprodev will have a stand there, probably shared with Cidse (the RC counterpart of Aprodev). There will be several activities, an WCC intervention by former SG Sam Kobia etc.

Strategy meetings

During the negotiations there will be daily strategy meetings for church lobbyists (Aprodev, WCC).

Climate work in the European Churches

Apart from the international negotiations a lot more can and should be done by the churches. Participants in the Lund consultation informed each other about their activities. See the website of ECEN: www.ecen.org! Here is a shortlist:

CCEE

CCEE is preparing a green pilgrimage for delegates from different Bishops' Conferences. After the series of environmental conferences held a couple of years ago, a book was published. See www.ccee.ch

UK - Operation Noah

The Ark Campaign is moving around the country, a booklet has been made. The Minister of Environment supports the Campaign and vice versa: the House of Parliament passed a good climate bill. Operation

Noah works with other bodies like Christian Aid, the African Bishops' Synod Africa in the Climate Justice initiative, and secular bodies insofar they embrace Christian values. Also Archbishop Kelly started an initiative in relation to creation theology.

The Archbishop of Canterbury had a lecture on climate change on 13 October, see www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2565

On 5 December there will be a national demonstration in London. After COP 15 a new plan needs to be made.

Germany - EKD

The EKD Synod recommended in 2008 to all member churches to bring down emissions up to 25 % until 2015. But this is not enough any more! The EKD wants to introduce a speed limit on the roads and has asked all parishes to discuss the new study Sustainable Germany. The number of green parishes is slowly growing. The Kirchentag now is 95 – 97 % green. In June 2010 there will be an ecumenical Kirchentag on climate culture – changing lifestyle. There is a Climate Alliance together with more than 100 NGOs working against nuclear energy, and for a moratorium on coal power stations. There is an ecumenical campaign 'buying future', stimulating green procurement by churches. There is a dialogue between EKD and VW about downsizing cars in 2012, 2013. The idea is to use car engines in cellars of vicars and church buildings for cogeneration, working towards decentralised power stations. Estimations are that the RCC and EKD emit 20 million tons of CO₂ per year, which is more than 2 % of overall German emissions.

Czech Republic / Slovakia

Cz: On the whole there is growing consciousness of environmental issues. A Rocha is active, so is the Orthodox Academy in Vilemov. Recently there was a study day organised by the Ecumenical Council of Churches on the occasion of the Czech Presidency of the EU. ECEN members spoke on climate change. The church booklet on the EU Presidency, with parts on energy, was widely circulated, also under government personnel. So far 25 solar roofs on church buildings are finished.

Sl: The Slovak Lutheran Church recently opened an environmental centre.

Poland / Belarus

The Orthodox Church in Poland has some environmental projects; also in Belarus the Orthodox church started some climate projects. ECEN needs to support these countries better.

Sweden

The Church of Sweden has new study material on Ethics and Energy, with the recommendation to shift to green energy and use energy efficiently. The project is a combination of ecumenical reflection and hands-on work. So far the working materials (including measurements of emissions) exist only for individuals, hopefully later also for parishes. A new website on climate change will be opened on 7 November.

Scotland

The Church of Scotland got a subsidy from the government for its website with measurements of GHG emissions, carbon footprint etc., encouraging all congregations to bring down their footprint. There are now over 220 registered eco-congregations. They not only bring down their footprint as a church, but also at home. Scotland has possibly the most demanding climate legislation in the world, requiring a 42% reduction of GHG emissions by 2020. This can be considered a major success for Stop Climate Chaos, in which the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Episcopal Church and several church development agencies take part.

Denmark

Has a theological website for liturgical work, creation time, environmental theology: 'Climate Clear Christianity'. The model of Finland is followed, so that congregations can download materials and start work. Churches now can obtain an environmental diploma, issued by an energy service, a semi-official body.

Finland

The Church of Finland issued 3000 copies of the new climate project booklet in Finnish, it is also

translated in English and Swedish. So far there is no criticism on the theology. Also some 100 congregations have the environmental diploma, for which there is a book of 150 pages with guidelines. A new edition is in the making, with special emphasis on climate change. About half of those diplomas went to small parishes in the North. Recently there were 3 seminars with trade unions, politicians and churches on the economic crisis and climate change. Finland joins the bell ringing campaign and arranges worship services. A new prayer book with creation theology is about to be published.

Ireland

There will be a national CC event in Dublin, plus an event in each province, with poetry, arts, music etc. The alliance Stop Climate Chaos is very powerful. It links churches, development agencies and NGOs and also lobbies with governments in the developing world. A publication on CC from different angles is in the making, as well as a pastoral letter, hopefully in time for COP 15. There will be an ecumenical service on December 13 plus the bell ringing. Also monasteries are involved, with organic farming etc.

The Netherlands

The Dutch Council of Churches published a paper on climate change recently, urging its member churches to take action, shift to green energy etc. A national network of church environmental groups and organisations tries to coordinate different initiatives. The climate project of the Protestant Church and its development agency brings together action in the North with projects on green energy in the South, via a climate fund. Also there is a church based organisation on wind energy, helping individuals to generate their own green energy, and lobbying to use land owned by churches for wind turbines.

Italy

After the ECEN Assembly in Milano, the Protestant Federation decided to support the organisers financially. There is a beginning of a new network on environment. ECEN material has been translated into Italian and a message on lifestyle sent to the churches. Also a letter was sent to politicians, related to COP 15. There is much attention for Food Week (the FAO meets in Rome 16 October), and the link with environment, climate change etc. New educational materials on environmental issues are being prepared for next year.

Austria

ARGE Schöpfung is now active for 20 years as an eco-social ecumenical and interreligious movement. The basis is formed by the 1st European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel in 1989. ARGE brings together 24 natural scientists, 12 theologians, and several NGOs. Some 200 expositions, educations and trainings were organised. Since 1996 there is a project on climate change, linked with mobility and future generations. ARGE also works with post-communist countries. It works about 200 weekhours, with no budget from churches but financial help from the state. It received the highest state prize, but unfortunately receives little appreciation from the RCC.

Philippines

One of ARGEs missions is in the Philippines, which has been severely hit by flooding recently. The situation is very bad because of (illegal) deforestation. A former signature campaign against that was very successful, but afterwards no action was taken. Bishops only pray that disaster will not strike, but don't want to change habits, which is very frustrating. It is very difficult to find funding for reforestation projects.

Maybe ECEN or the European churches could send an encouragement, and build support for celebration of Creation Time? And could a European church / NGOs partnership help with reforestation?

Next ECEN Assembly

The next ECEN Assembly will likely be held in the Czech Republic following the invitation of churches from that country. There is a proposal for 9-12 June 2010. Decisions about the date, venue as well as the theme of the Assembly will be made in the coming days following a discussion in the ECEN Leadership Group.

Amsterdam, 20 October 2009

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facilitator for working group on climate change