



Protecting the Basis of Life

Declaration of the working committee “Religions and Nature Conservation” to the 23rd UN Climate Conference in Bonn

Conservation of nature and its diversity as well as the protection of people's livelihoods is a common and lasting duty for religions, which has been enshrined in religious texts and oral traditions for thousands of years – in stories of the creation, parables and other forms of wisdom passed down through generations. In order to live up to this claim, the contribution of religions to tackle the climate crisis is crucially important, in addition to all governmental efforts.

Climate change is a threat to millions of people already: global poverty and hunger are on the rise. The weakest and poorest have contributed least to climate change, and furthermore they are least able to protect themselves from the impacts of climate change. However, they are hit by it the hardest. More and more people are losing their entire livelihood and are forced to flee their country. A climate-friendly global development would be of particular help for these people. Moreover, other living members of the natural world are in need of special protection: human activity and the climate change associated with it are endangering animals, plants and ecosystems to an extent never seen before, and are even driving them to extinction.

This is why it is our responsibility to take action on behalf of future generations and ensure that our children and grandchildren, as well as our fellow creatures, will have living conditions that are sustainable. Global climate change, substantially brought about by humankind, is endangering our future however. It is a threat to people's lives and also to biodiversity.

A consequent implementation of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement provides the possibility to overcome the global crisis. For this to happen, the agreements have to be put into effect now. The UN Climate Change Conference 2017 in Bonn, Germany, has to be a step forward regarding the implementation of national and international climate commitments in a practical way.

A fundamental change is necessary.

Governments, industry, civil society and each and every one of us must strive to achieve the following goals:

- The burning of coal, oil and gas must be reduced and the fossil fuel industry gradually phased out without turning to hazardous nuclear technology instead.
- The energy and transport sectors must halt their reliance on fossil fuels as soon as possible; there must be a greater than ever expansion of renewable energy.
- At the same time it is important to reduce energy consumption by improving energy efficiency and sufficiency in all areas; in particular, the environmental performance of buildings must be improved.
- (Small-scale) family farming and organic agriculture must be expanded; consumption of meat and fish should be reduced.
- We must reject excessive consumption and the throwaway mentality.
- Unlimited economic growth should no longer be our aim.
- Money should be invested sustainably and investments that harm the climate have to be avoided.
- The weakest and poorest must be given help to cope with the impacts of irreversible climate change.



Only by taking these and other steps we can achieve the goal of limiting the rise in global temperatures to significantly less than 2°C, and if possible 1.5°C, as stated in the Paris Climate Agreement.

That is why we are calling the German government to urgently adopt the necessary measures, so that Germany can meet the climate action targets. According to the Paris Agreement, greenhouse gas emissions must be cut by 40% in 2020 and 55% in 2030, in comparison with 1990 levels. The 2050 German climate change mitigation plan must be rigorously implemented so that emissions are reduced by 95% in 2050. Moreover, a socially acceptable withdrawal from coal-fired power generation and a transition to green transport must be agreed upon and set in motion. In addition, issues of nature conservation and environmental protection have to be understood from the perspective of social justice more than ever and have to be incorporated in all spheres of governmental administration, so that the transformation towards a more eco-friendly form of society can become real. Germany led the way on climate policy in international discussions. Words must now be turned into actions.

In our religious communities we aim at intensifying our support at all levels for the pursuit of these goals and for advancing climate change mitigation and conservation of the environment as a fundamental principle of religious activity, in order to foster global transformation. By taking action ourselves – whether it relates to buildings, energy supply, transport, food, investment or global partnerships for climate-protection – and a spirituality that is appropriate to the crisis described above, we can play a crucial role: together as religions and each one of us as individuals we are able to develop measures for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and put them into practise in an energetic and decisive way.

Frankfurt am Main, 9th of November 2017

The members of the Religions and Nature Conservation Working Group are:

Saba Detweiler (Bahá'í Gemeinde in Deutschland), Asmaa El Maaroufi (Zentrum für Islamische Theologie der Universität Münster), Prof. Dr. Karl-Heinz Erdmann (Bundesamt für Naturschutz), Helga Inden-Heinrich (Deutscher Naturschutzring), Dr. Christine Katz (Leuphana-Universität Lüneburg), Dr. Jonna Kuchler-Krischun (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit), Paula Mack (Abrahamisches Forum), Dr. Hubert Meisinger (Zentrum Gesellschaftliche Verantwortung der Evangelischen Kirche in Hessen und Nassau), Dr. Jürgen Micksch (Abrahamisches Forum), Andreas Mues (Bundesamt für Naturschutz), Mira Nürnberg (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit), Dr. Irfan Ortac (Zentralrat der Eziden in Deutschland), Till-David Schade (NABU), Khushwant Singh (Vertreter der Sikh-Religion), Alexander Smolianitski (Limmud e.V.), Michael Slaby (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Buddhismus und Umwelt der DBU), Haladhara Thaler (Hindu-Gemeinde Berlin), Melek Yildiz (Alevitische Gemeinde in Deutschland), Marc Witzenbacher (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Christlicher Kirchen in Deutschland).



This declaration is supported by the following institutions and individuals:

*Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat KdÖR
Bund Deutscher Dialog Institutionen
Brot für die Welt
Deutsches Islamforum
Evangelisch-Lutherischer Kirchenkreis Hamburg-Ost
Hanmaum Zen Zentrum Deutschland
Institut für Kirche und Gesellschaft der Evangelischen Kirche Westfalen
Institut für Theologische Zoologie
Katholische Landjugendbewegung e.V. (KLJB)
Möwe – Amt für Mission, Ökumene und kirchliche Weltverantwortung
Nationaler Geistiger Rat der Bahá'í in Deutschland
Rat der Deutschen Buddhistischen Union
Runder Tisch der Religionen Osnabrück
Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland
Zentrum für Mission und Ökumene – nordkirche weltweit
Zentrum Gesellschaftliche Verantwortung der Evangelischen Kirche Hessen-Nassau*

Prof. em. Dr. Wilhelm Barthlott (Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn), Tom Hanusch, (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau und Reaktorsicherheit), Petra Kunik (Gesellschaft für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit Frankfurt am Main), Ute Leucht (Deutsche Buddhistische Union e. V. – Buddhistische Religionsgemeinschaft, AG Buddhismus und Umwelt), Prof. Dr. Andreas Lienkamp (Universität Osnabrück), Bettina Münch-Epple (WWF Deutschland), Dr. Torsten Raynal-Ehrke (Kompetenzzentrum Naturschutz und Energiewende, KNE), Dr. Beatrice van Saan-Klein (Umweltbeauftragte des Bistums Fulda), Dr. André Witthöft-Mühlmann, (Umweltbeauftragter der Evang. Landeskirche in Baden)