

## **COP18 DECLARATION**

We, members of a wide range of faith communities of Southern Africa, believe all people have been given responsibility to care for creation. We are called to be custodians of this amazing planet, to care, to protect and look after it for future generations. It is not ours to possess. It is ours to pass on in a better state to our children.

At the COP17 climate talks in Durban last year, the faith leaders of Africa called on world leaders, first “to be honest,” and that “moral principles - and not profit and economic gain – should be applied in climate negotiations, in order to secure our common future.”

We make this call in the knowledge of our total dependence on the wellbeing of this planet. We cannot survive without clean water, clean air, fertile soil to grow our crops, or the abundance of natural resources, such as forests and marine life.

We are alarmed at the present condition of the planet, where we humans are exceeding our ecological footprint by 140%, bringing huge destruction to the natural ecosystems – which are our life support systems - as well as increasing poverty and inequality. We believe there must be a fundamental change of direction if we are to pass a sustainable world on to our children. We recognize that it is the domination of financial interests over the wellbeing of people and the natural environment that is the primary cause of our current predicament.

Following the findings of the IPCC, and as all reputable scientists around the world have concluded, we recognize that biodiversity loss or in other words the extinction of creation is being hastened at an alarming rate by climate change, which is brought about by the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses primarily from the burning of fossil fuels. We in Africa are already experiencing the severe impact of climate change with alarming increases in storm severity, droughts and floods. We also believe that it would be a matter of extreme irresponsibility to follow a course of climate policy which allows global average temperatures to increase by 2 degrees centigrade. At 0.7 degrees increase so far, we have already found alarming increases in climate disruption. To allow average temperatures to increase by 2 degrees centigrade would make large parts of Africa uninhabitable – bringing about massive starvation and migration. We therefore call on the nations of the world to recognize the severity of the situation and recognize that we need to start reducing our burning of fossil fuels – that is coal, oil and gas - as a matter of urgency.

We believe it essential that all nations work together to meet our energy needs from current energy sources, namely the sun, wind, ocean currents, as well as hydro – rather than relying on fossil fuel laid down millions of years ago. Since electricity is the most efficient form of energy, we should generate it directly from sun and wind, rather than through the burning of fossil fuels.

We therefore call on all nations to seek justice for people and planet. This means that the “developed” nations will assist developing countries to leapfrog the polluting fossil fuel age, into the new, clean renewable energy age. This will not only help the people of developing countries in providing them with clean energy, which is needed, but it would also help the overall position of the world – as people of Africa will no longer be required to rely on firewood for their energy sources . We also know that as greater justice and equity is implemented, so more people in developing countries will receive higher levels of education, which will help reduce population increase.

We call upon the nations of the world to work together to meet this greatest of threats. We, the faith communities, have direct experience in Africa of climate change. We are deeply involved in the suffering of rural and poor people. We believe our responsibility extends beyond ambulance work. We need to seek to correct the unjust structures of our world.

Faith communities are the largest civil society bodies in Africa. Therefore we want to partner with our governments, to engage with them, meeting the challenges facing us at a social, economic and environmental level.

We also believe that all our governments need to work with the UN as the one international body that can enable us to work together to seek a solution. We believe that the Kyoto solution needs to be adhered to and expanded for the future.

We, people of faith, call on all faith communities to act now for climate justice.