
Launch of an Ethical “Smart Energy” Future for South Africa

St. Georges Cathedral Crypt - Thursday 29th November 2012

Statement on behalf of the Western Cape Religious Leaders Forum (WCRLF)

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Environmental justice and consciousness is not the sole responsibility of environmental experts or public officials, but rather it should be an integral part of what it means to be a responsible citizen and a person of faith. The conscientious believer is someone who is concerned about issues of environmental justice and who tries to live in reverence and harmony with nature and the environment.

From a faith perspective, the environmental crisis that humanity is facing today can be viewed as a symptom of a deeper spiritual malaise. This spiritual malaise has come about through our extravagant and consumerist lifestyles that have transgressed the balance between humans and nature. An imbalance or altering of balance has taken place at the individual, social and global levels and this is now being reflected in the environmental crisis.

A critical dimension of this crisis is that of global warming and climate change. As responsible global citizens it is incumbent on all of us to engage in environmental transformation. We need to try our best to restrain our destructive habits, reduce our carbon emissions and to heal our relationship with the earth.

Hence we are here as people of faith to express our deep concern that our public policies are not in sync with the best options for preserving our natural environment, saving energy and alleviating poverty. Just a few days ago the Environmental Management

Inspectorate (EMI) released a report which found that "Eskom remains the organ of state with the highest rate of non-compliance with environmental legislation." We are further alarmed to learn that Eskom proposes to build additional nuclear energy plants to meet our energy needs. In addition to the environmental danger this will create it will also cause increases to the cost of our already high electricity tariffs.

What is even more disconcerting is that these flawed public policies come at a time when credible research carried out by the Electricity Governance Initiative (EGI) has produced clear recommendations to the government contained in its **Smart Electricity Plan**. This Plan sets out clear steps that can be taken which would meet South Africa's energy needs, increase employment and reduce carbon emissions.

We call on our government to adopt the **Smart Electricity Plan** which clearly shows that South Africa can meet all its energy needs without resorting to further coal or nuclear power stations. Moreover, by embracing the EGI research proposals South Africa will be able to meet the needs of the future in a manner which will address poverty and inequity in a real and direct way.

We are to here to pledge our support to work with our government in developing an energy policy for a sustainable and healthy future. As faith communities we hope and pray our government will heed our call to fully embrace public policies which will care for the future wellbeing of people and life on this planet, our only home.