

Workshop on the Role of Churches in Addressing Climate Change

Nyamata, Rwanda, 16 – 18 March 2016

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We, delegates, experts, UEM staff and guests from the UEM communion in Western Tanzania, Rwanda, Eastern Congo and Germany have met in Nyamata, Rwanda, from 16 to 18 March 2016 to reflect on the role of the churches in addressing climate change. We appreciate the presence of our church leaders in the workshop.

The different exchanges and presentations have reminded us of the danger we and the whole creation are facing if we continue to destroy the environment and contribute to climate change. In fact, the recurrent natural calamities such as floods, land sliding, hurricanes, excessive heating, droughts, some plant and human diseases are all consequences of bad uses of land and nature

As stewards of God's creation in accordance with Genesis 2:15, we understand that it is our responsibility to take care of all creatures, including human beings, animals and especially nature, without which no other creature can live.

We appreciate the efforts done by the churches to address the issue of climate change as we heard from the reports of the churches and encourage them to keep it up.

However, we heard also about the challenges they are facing in their endeavours, including:

1. Low community awareness about the risks of climate change which constitutes an obstacle to ownership of protection measures;
2. Lack of knowledge and skills among community and church members in relation to climate protection;
3. Difficult cooperation between environment actors (churches, civil society, foreign agencies and government services);
4. Lack of resources to implement projects to address climate change;
5. Absence of measures of law enforcement in some countries;
6. Illegal exploitation of natural resources, including minerals and timber;
7. Land grabbing and replacement of food crops by eucalyptus;

8. High development rate/economic improvements without taking account its consequences on the environment.

In order to overcome those challenges, we commit ourselves to:

1. Include and strengthen climate justice and environment protection in our church Agenda and develop a policy to make Climate change a crosscutting issue and mainstream it in all church programmes;
2. Cooperate with other Churches and Institutions (NGOS, Government..) in addressing climate change issues wherever possible
3. Create a network of churches in the Great Lakes Region to promote climate justice and environmental protection, mainstream of climate justice in our churches, facilitate exchange and dissemination of relevant materials and network on youth action plan and environmental projects.
4. Implement similar projects like RDIS in other member churches as development projects, including training and support, and facilitate exchange of experiences with churches having such projects.
5. Promote conservation agriculture for land restoration through agro forestry, reforestation, and other modern land friendly farming techniques;
6. Integrate eco-theology/theology of creation and environment in theological and other training programmes including development programmes.
7. Make use of media (local magazine, radio station and website) to promote climate justice and climate spirituality.
8. Organize participatory appraisal of climate change related risks and help people at grassroots level to identify available resources for resilience against climate change effects;
9. Create a task force to continue reflecting on experience learning between churches in view of new development, improvement and forward continuation of climate justice. This requires external expertise;
10. Organize capacity building programs for church leaders at different levels;
11. Promote renewable energy to reduce pressure on forests;
12. Advocate for human rights against land grabbing and for the enforcement of existing laws and introduction of new laws to protect people and the environment.
13. Link climate justice with development to put human life and creation at the centre of our work.

We recommend to UEM to continue with the program on climate justice and environmental protection, to support and integrate in its work initiatives from member churches in the Region.