The WCC is disappointed with the outcome of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/executive-committee/bossey-february-2010/minute-on-unfccc-conference-of-parties-cop-15-in-copenhagen.html)

The WCC is disappointed with the outcome of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP 15) held in Copenhagen from 7 to 18 December 2009 as the Copenhagen Accord did not reach the expectations of the ecumenical movement and the larger civil society.

The COP-15 was seen as a significant opportunity to reach an agreement after the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol (KP) which will end in 2012. The Kyoto Protocol, the binding instrument that applies to the UNFCCC, had agreed on targets for this period. The meeting in Copenhagen was expected to reach an agreement on what would comprise the commitments of the industrialized countries and economies in transition that are considered as Annex I parties of the Kyoto Protocol, those who are compelled to reduce their emissions.

The mobilization of the ecumenical movement towards and in Copenhagen was aimed at supporting widespread initiatives in order to reach a fair, ambitious and binding treaty. This should have included the recognition of the historic responsibility for the CO2 emissions of industrialized countries, a measurable commitment to have a maximum of 350 ppm of CO2 in the atmosphere, concrete ways of adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and funding in a legally binding instrument which would have framed the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

A strong collaboration between the WCC and various ecumenical actors, with the support of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denmark, the National Council of Churches in Denmark and Dan Church Aid helped to facilitate coordination and ecumenical participation. The ecumenical “Countdown to Copenhagen” campaign collected more than half a million signatures. The bell-ringing and prayer campaign on 13 December 2009 mobilized more than two thousand congregations, parishes, chapels and various other groups in all regions. Church leaders present in Copenhagen clearly conveyed the message to the negotiators: “Do not be afraid to make the decisions that must be made for all of humanity and for the future of creation. Do not be afraid to act for justice and for love. Do not be afraid to make a fair, ambitious and legally-binding agreement. Do not be afraid: act now!” Despite this and many other calls, the Copenhagen Accord, negotiated primarily by five countries and then opened for signatures, did not meet the desired expectations. After the deadline for the communication of voluntary reductions, the accord is still contested by many.

The World Council of Churches deeply regrets that a lack of political will from major players in COP 15 prevented achievement of a deal which would effectively respond to the climate change challenge. The moral obligations of the states to adopt a clear position regarding adaptation, mitigation and technology transfer failed to prevail as individual state interests became prominent.

The World Council of Churches has been addressing climate change-related challenges since 1988 which has facilitated the recognition of various dimensions related to environmental, political, social, economic and cultural aspects of climate change as well as addressing the justice component. Those who suffer most due to the impact of climate change are impoverished and vulnerable communities who contribute only minimally to global warming. Climate justice requires the implementation of effective adaptation and mitigation measures as well as technology transfer in order to reduce the consequences of climate change. At the same time, climate change is considered within the broader perspective of caring for creation, which is grounded in the biblical call. The policy of the WCC on climate change has been expressed on several occasions and recently in the Statement on the tenth anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol (executive committee, September 2007), the Minute on Global Warming and Climate Change (central committee, February 2008) and the statement on ecological debt and eco-justice (central committee, September 2009).

In light of these considerations, the executive committee of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 23-26 February 2010:

A. ***Reiterates*** the serious concerns expressed by the churches over climate change and its life-threatening effects, especially on the poor and vulnerable communities in many parts of the world, such as the low-lying islands of the Pacific or the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region;

B. ***Appreciates*** the wide ecumenical participation in the process towards and in COP 15 in Copenhagen with ecumenical activities such as the ecumenical celebration, the handing over of signatures, lobbying, side events and the statement presented at the high-level segment.

C. ***Affirms*** the basic thrust of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol to provide an instrument for a significant reduction of greenhouse gases in order to mitigate human-induced climate change;

D. ***Calls*** for renewed efforts with its member churches to call on their respective governments to ensure with urgency a fair, ambitious and binding agreement to be reached as a result of the COP 16 that will take place in Mexico in December 2010;

E. ***Encourages*** member churches, specialized ministries and other ecumenical partners to strengthen further their commitment and to foster their cooperation with regard to climate change, especially in the process towards and at COP 16 in Mexico;

F. ***Urges*** member churches and ecumenical councils to enhance inter-religious cooperation and constructive intervention, ensuring better stewardship of creation through their joint actions.

- World Council of Churches, Switzerland, 23-26 February 2010.