

***Faith Based Recommendations for United States Participation in COP17
Ensuring a Global Commitment Beyond Kyoto***

As people and communities of faith, called to till and to tend – to protect and to serve - God’s Creation and seek justice for all people, we believe that a global framework and response to climate change is necessary to prevent its worst impacts. A broad spectrum of the interfaith community in the United States has identified a set of principles and goals that we believe are vital components of any international agreement. The principles are justice, stewardship, sustainability and sufficiency. Justice reflects the need to protect and serve vulnerable communities around the world, stewardship honors the great gift of God’s Creation, sustainability focuses on the need to leave God’s Earth better than we found it for future generations and sufficiency is a call to all of us to use only what is sufficient for our daily lives and not over-consume the gifts with which God has blessed us. Using these principles we have identified the following goals which we feel the United States and the global community must achieve to ensure a faithful response to this moral crisis.

In an effort to follow the structure of past international climate discussions, this document will focus on mitigation, adaptation, the need for a binding agreement, and the role of the most vulnerable developing nations.

As an overall matter, we urge U.S. negotiators to maintain a strong commitment to keeping the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations as open and transparent as possible. The U.S. should continue to advocate for a process that facilitates the active and meaningful participation of all Parties, as well as relevant stakeholders, including civil society, women, indigenous peoples and developing nations. The negotiation of an effective agreement to address this critical issue depends, in part, on strong support by a broad representation of civil society; support that is possible only if negotiations and outcomes are as open and transparent as possible to all stakeholders.

Ensuring a Binding Post-Kyoto Agreement

In 2012, Phase I of the Kyoto Protocol, a binding agreement addressing global climate change and the need for emissions reductions will come to a close. As people of faith we believe that the next steps in the United Nations efforts to address global climate change should include a similarly binding agreement. A binding agreement will substantiate the commitment of countries around the world to address climate change in an effective and moral way.

While the next agreement need not be an extension of the Kyoto Protocol, we believe that it must be fair to all parties, seek ambitious emission reduction targets and adaptation goals and serve as a formal binding agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that would highlight the continuing work at the international level.

Hearing the Needs of the Most Vulnerable Developing Nations

Part of the need for a binding agreement after the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol is to ensure the needs of small island states and the world’s most vulnerable developing countries are heard, recognized and addressed. While these countries are least responsible for the current and historical greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change, they are disproportionately suffering from the impacts of climate change such as rising sea level, droughts, and natural disasters.

Any process of securing a binding agreement beyond the Kyoto Protocol must ensure the needs of developing nations are not only being heard but are being addressed through all necessary means including adaptation assistance, mitigation and technology transfers where appropriate.

As the world's largest historical contributor to the climate crisis, it is our responsibility to protect and provide for those who are already suffering from the impacts of climate change that we can no longer prevent. In recognizing and living out this responsibility to care for the most vulnerable among us, we must ensure a space for the voice and needs of these countries to be heard and addressed.

Mitigation – Using Common Ground as Guidelines for Success

In 2009, COP 15 agreed, collectively, to take note of the Copenhagen Accord as developed by the United States and many of the high-emitting developing nations such as China and India.

In the accord, governments agreed that in order to prevent the worst impacts of human-induced climate change, they must recognize/accept "the scientific view that the increase in global temperature should be below 2 degrees Celsius." In order to prevent this increase in global temperature, mitigation efforts are needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the United States and abroad.

With this agreement, it is vital that countries, especially the US do all that it can to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions in line with the goal of no more than 2 degrees Celsius of increased global temperature. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has noted that the global community must reduce emissions by a minimum of 80 percent by 2050 below a 1990 baseline to stay within this limit. Achieving these targets will prevent the predicted devastation of God's Creation, including all of God's people, caused by catastrophic climate change.

The United States must play a significant role in any global effort to achieve these emissions reduction targets. In addition to global negotiations, the U.S. will also have to implement effective domestic legislation that will reduce emissions at home, setting an example for all Annex 1 nations. This recognition of common but differentiated responsibility for climate change, reflecting past actions and contributions to the climate crisis, is critical if climate negotiations are to ensure climate justice for all.

Emissions reductions must be permanent and verifiable for long term success, to prevent massive extinction of species and the displacement of thousands of communities and millions of families from their homes. The permanence of greenhouse gas emissions reductions will also ensure that the international climate program is sustainable for future generations. Such a program would fulfill the principles of justice and stewardship most important to our community.

Because emissions reductions are centrally important to ensuring a just and sustainable future for all of God's Creation, we believe that countries that do not comply with their agreed-upon reduction targets should be penalized. Any revenue leveraged from these penalties should be directed toward funding for mitigation or adaptation programs in Non-Annex 1 countries.

Providing Adaptation Assistance for the Most Vulnerable Among Us

As nations continue to develop a global agreement to address climate change, we cannot overlook the current needs of the most vulnerable among us whose lives have already been impacted by global climate change. Millions of people around the world, particularly in the world's most vulnerable developing nations, are suffering from increased exposure to natural disasters, more frequent floods and droughts, and a higher incidence of forced displacement/migration to ensure survival.

As the negotiations continue in Durban, it is vital that all countries agree to strong protections for those who will suffer the impacts of climate change that we can no longer prevent. The United States, as the world's largest historical emitter and largest current per capita emitter of greenhouse gases should position itself as a champion for the most vulnerable around the world. We must ensure assistance to those living in poverty.

In particular, the United States must provide significant new *public* funds in support of the efforts of vulnerable less industrialized countries to adapt to the effects of climate change. Just a few years ago, after witnessing the destructive policies of international financial institutions holding the debt of less-industrialized nations, the faith community advocated for debt cancellation through the Jubilee 2000 campaign. As countries around the world struggle to recover from the latest financial crisis, we encourage the U.S. to learn from past experience and to ensure that sole managerial responsibility for adaptation funds does not rest with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, or the regional development banks.

Various models completed by the United Nations have shown that developing nations will need between \$28-86 billion dollars a year to adapt to the impacts of climate change currently predicted. We believe that the United States should provide 25 percent of this funding to account for our historical emissions. Therefore, we should commit at least \$7 billion a year to help meet the needs of God's people around the world.

We hope that the United States and others will keep these recommendations in mind during the upcoming UN climate negotiations, recognizing the importance of protecting all Creation and all people from the devastating impacts of climate change. In doing so, we will ensure a sustainable and just future for the next generation and generations to come.

May God's grace and peace be with the global community as we seek a truly faithful response to climate change in the coming months.

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Friends Committee on National Legislation

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