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Climate Change, Hunger and Poverty

Global warming will have **severe and negative effects** on the livelihood of millions of the world's poorest people. The most marginalised and vulnerable groups with the lowest adaptation capacity will be affected the most and forecasts foresee drastic impacts on poverty, food security and hunger in the world's poorest countries.

DCA works with our partners in Africa, Asia and Central America to avoid the negative effects of global warming. There is a need for urgent action.

DCA works to ensure:

1. that we limit global warming to a **two degree temperature increase** implying a significant reduction in energy and resource use especially in the rich countries.
2. that climate change mitigation policies and energy constraints safeguard the right of all people everywhere to reach a dignified level of sustainable human development and do not stand in the way of achieving the **Millennium Development Goals**.
3. that we integrate global warming as a **cross-cutting concern** into all development and relief activities to increase the adaptive capacity and avoid increased vulnerability to climate change
4. that we develop a **fair global burden sharing** arrangement based on capacity and responsibility following the principles set out by the Greenhouse Development Rights, implying significantly **increased, predictable and additional funding** to the world's poorest countries.
5. that we strengthen the transfer of and access to **new and clean technology** to developing countries in support of both mitigation and adaptation.
6. that the International Climate Negotiations are **inclusive and transparent**, with full **participation** of developing countries and strong avenues of influence for civil society.

Background

The impacts of climate change are already seen and will become especially severe in a number of the world's poorest countries that are highly vulnerable and with very little coping capacity. Basic food security is one of the first areas to be effected, leading to hunger and malnutrition.

In Africa by 2020, between 75 and 250 million people are projected to be exposed to an increase of water stress due to climate change with potential hunger crisis as a result. In some African countries, yields from rain-

fed agriculture could be reduced by up to 50 percent by 2020 already.

Freshwater availability in Central, South, East and Southeast Asia is projected to decrease and adversely affect more than a billion people by the 2050s. Many millions more people are projected to be flooded every year by the 2080s especially in the mega-deltas of Asia and Africa. Small islands are especially vulnerable.

Extreme weather events, including tropical cyclones, will become more intense with increasing economic and social costs, and this can have severe negative impacts in vulnerable countries for instance in Central America.

It is without doubt that increases in global atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases caused by human activities - fossil fuel use, land use change and agriculture - have contributed significantly to global warming. Eleven of the last twelve years (1995-2006) rank among the 12 warmest years in the record of global surface temperature measured since 1850. The total temperature increase in the period from 1850-1899 and to 2001-2005 is 0.76 °C. Widespread decreases in glaciers and ice caps have contributed to sea level rise. The total 20th-century rise is estimated to 0.17 m, with a current estimated annual rise of about 3.1 mm per year.

For the next two decades a warming of about 0.2 °C per decade is projected. Even if all greenhouse gases were kept constant at the year 2000 levels a further warming of 0.1 °C per decade would be expected. If the temperature increases by more than 2 degrees compared with pre-industrial levels drastic changes are likely to occur. It is imperative that this does not happen.

The impacts of climate change demand strong and urgent responses within both mitigation and adaptation.¹

Urgent action needed

If we are to limit global warming to a **less than two degree temperature increase** compared with pre-industrial levels, it is necessary to reduce the outlet of greenhouse gases by 50-80 percent in 2050 compared with the 1990-level.² To reach this target there is a need for action from all countries, but it is imperative that the rich countries take the lead by cutting their resource use and reducing the outlet of CO₂ substantially. This can only be done through significant changes in lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Also the poor countries must contribute – building sustainable energy systems and sustaining their forests - but it must be done in a way that safeguards the right of all people everywhere to reach a dignified level of sustainable human development.

¹ IPCC, 2007: IPCC Fourth Assessment Report (AR4). Available at www.ipcc.ch/

² Tearfund et al (2007): Two degrees, one chance.

For developing countries – in need of growth and industrialisation to reduce poverty and hunger and to reach the Millennium Development goals it is important that climate policies and energy constraints do not stand in the way of **ensuring poor people sufficient energy** to ensure a life in dignity, security and without poverty. Policies to promote the use of biofuels, can, for instance, in the short run, lead to higher food prices and less land available for food production with negative impacts in the form of increased hunger and malnutrition for the world's poor.³

There are also tendencies of increased protectionism based on a claim of higher energy use from imports than from domestic goods, despite that studies have shown a much more nuanced picture. For instance, the emissions produced by growing flowers in Kenya and flying them to the UK can be less than a fifth of those grown in heated and lighted greenhouses in Holland.⁴

Therefore, to avoid negative impacts of climate actions, the right to development and the goals set out in the Millennium Development Goals must be included in the design and promotion of any policies to combat global warming.

This also underlines that to ensure that responses to poverty and climate change go hand in hand it is important to **integrate global warming as a cross-cutting concern** into all development and relief activities. It is imperative that development and relief programmes increase the adaptive capacity and that they do not increase vulnerability to climate change.⁵ It is necessary to rethink and reorient our approach to issues such as food security, forestry and agricultural development, disaster preparedness and response. The critical challenge is to create multiple-win situations where human development, poverty reduction, environmental improvement and climate change mitigation and adaptation go hand in hand.

The costs of coping with climate change will be substantial. The incremental costs of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to range from less than \$10 billion per year to about \$200 billion per year. Estimates show that there is a need for additionally US\$ 50-86 billion annually to assist developing countries in adapting to climate change.⁶ These studies reveal a significant funding need to be covered to avoid potential set-backs in development, poverty and hunger.

It is therefore critical to develop a **fair burden-sharing framework**. DanChurchAid supports the concepts and principles behind the Greenhouse Development Rights: A burden-sharing system that is progressive with respect to the responsibility for current and historic outlet of greenhouse gases and with respect to capacity defined as income above a development threshold.⁷

There is an urgent need for action and for ensuring **significantly increased, predictable and additional funding** to the world's poorest countries to assist in mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Currently, there are numerous examples where funding for climate change actions are drawn from existing development aid. This is in contradiction with both global needs and international funding principles. Funding for both cli-

mate adaptation and mitigation must follow the polluter-pays principle and be additional to development aid. New and automatic funding mechanisms should be developed (e.g. international taxes on air travel) and earmarked to climate change needs..

The Clean Development Mechanism, designed to curb CO₂ emissions and transfer funds and technology to developing countries at the same time, is primarily used in middle-income developing countries/areas and therefore only brings limited benefits for the world's poorest countries. It is important that the Clean Development Mechanism is adjusted and utilised to ensure additional funding and technology to the world's poorest countries.

Finally, the **transfer of and access to new and clean technology** to developing countries must be significantly strengthened in support of both mitigation and adaptation. A combination of various initiatives must be used, not only focusing on additional funds and funding mechanisms but also to ensure access of clean technology through trade measures, corporate social responsibility and not least through improved access to Intellectual Property Rights (patents, plant variety protection etc.) on the technology needed to strengthen mitigation and adaptation.

Up to now the International Climate Negotiations have been biased towards the rich countries. On average, the G8 countries have been represented by almost five times as many delegates as the least developed countries.⁸ To ensure just and democratic negotiations **developing countries and the civil society must be included** in a broad-based and transparent way. The decisions we take in the coming years will frame the future not only for us or our children but for the living conditions on the Earth in all foreseeable future. We must take these decisions together in a just, transparent and democratic manner.

Theological foundation

DanChurchAid works from a Christian foundation and this gives us an even stronger obligation to tackle climate change. The creation of God is core in Christianity and we have - as human beings - been given a role as stewards to protect God's creation, the nature and every living creature.

Moreover, Christianity constitutes a bulwark against greed and mismanagement and a call for a change in lifestyle to help the world's poor and marginalised and to protect them against the negative effects from global warming.

³ IFPRI (2007): The World Food Situation - New Driving Forces and Required Actions. Food Policy Report No. 18.

⁴ Müller, B. (2007): Food Miles or Poverty Eradication?, Oxford Institute for Energy Studies; and DFID (2007): Balancing the cost of food air miles.

⁵ GECHS (2001): Tilpasning til klimaendringer i bistandsarbejdet. 1-2007. Global Environmental Change and Human Security, Oslo, Norway.

⁶ World Bank (2006): Clean Energy and Development, Washington DC; OXFAM (2007): Adapting to climate change. Oxfam Briefing Paper.

⁷ Baer, P.; Athanasiou, T. and Kartha, S. (2007): The Right to Development in a Climate Constrained World. Christian Aid and Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

⁸ DanChurchAid (2008): Unbalanced participation. Research Paper.