

USCMA Resolution on Global Climate Change 2006 Annual Conference

At its core, global climate change is not about economic theory or political platforms, nor about partisan advantage or interest group pressures. It is about the future of God's creation and the one human family. It is about protecting both "the human environment" and the natural environment.

USCCB, June 2001

Let it be resolved that:

As Catholic missionaries serving both internationally and locally, we are in a unique position to recognize the moral responsibility associated with the stewardship of creation and its impact on people throughout the world. Global Climate Change is not an optional issue. The serious negative effects of Global Climate Change are real and the challenge to act is urgent! Therefore, as US Catholic missionaries, we advocate a vision that focuses on the global common good transcending nationalism, partisan politics, or interest group pressures.

Rationale:

As missionaries, we have long been accustomed to serving as a voice for the voiceless. Today, we join our voices with those of the United States Catholic Bishops who have stressed the central role which the stewardship of creation has for believers.

We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This environmental challenge has fundamental moral and ethical dimensions that cannot be ignored. (Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions, 1998).

Our experience and concerns are consistent with those affirmed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development which met in Rio de Janeiro (1992) and affirmed by subsequent conferences which urged all nations to reduce greenhouse gases to mitigate the harmful effects of global warming. The overwhelming majority of the 1997 Kyoto conference participants strongly affirmed that the earth is experiencing global climate change which can have serious negative effects for the future. The consequences for future generations are profound and so this is not an optional issue.

We, USCMA members, see ourselves as active members of the international community, and so we recognize the importance of attending to the way discussion about global environmental change takes place. Today, the majority of public discourse concerning climate change, including global warming, the greenhouse effect and air pollution, seems to lead to polarized public debates rather than to a real discussion. The issues seem to be framed to defend and continue the financial gain of the few rather than the commonweal of the whole. For this reason, we value the U.S. Bishops' statement on Global Climate Change (2001) which affirmed the necessity for reasoned dialogue, for prudence which urges that we respond to global climate change and concern for the common good. (www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm)

Accordingly, we, USCMA members, affirm the 13 March 2006 letter of Bishop Thomas Wenski, Chair of the Bishops' Committee on International Policy, to the Senate's Committee on Energy and Natural Resources urging them to keep in mind three concerns as they draft legislation to mitigate harmful impact on global climate: 1) exercise concern for the poor so they do not bear the brunt of environmental distress; 2) exercise concern for workers in those industries which will be particularly affected by the necessity for change; 3) exercise special concern for the economic and technological needs of developing nations.

(http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/draft_2%20consultation.pdf)

We recognize that the environmental issues facing humanity today challenge us to become more knowledgeable of and articulate about the implications of global climate change. We cannot afford to fail in providing leadership in addressing these issues. We want to contribute our voice to support the pro-active and responsible corporate use of energy and natural resources. With pro-active leadership from the religious community, we believe that the gospel's missionary mandate to bring good news and stewardship to the ends of the earth can be fulfilled. Without this commitment, humanity may face instead the end of the earth as the life support system we have known and on which all humanity, rich and poor alike, depends.

Call for Specific Actions:

Accordingly, USCMA urges its members to:

- ❑ Become thoroughly familiar with and promote stewardship of the earth as integral to the gospel message and as expressed in the Bishops' recent policy statements noted above. www.usccb.org/sdwp
- ❑ Learn ways of integrating ecological concerns into our pastoral ministry and promoting a simple lifestyle as individuals, religious communities, and as a nation, in response to the destructive practices that abound in developed and developing nations.
- ❑ Seek ways of educating ourselves and our co-workers by making efforts to change systems and structures that are ecologically unsound. www.ucsusa.org/global_warming
- ❑ Conduct an audit of the impact which all our institutions, be they schools, hospitals, parishes and other community buildings have on the environment. We hope to generate an environmental impact statement for each and every institution over which we, the members, have direct control, and to be followed by a plan of action for improving the efficient stewardship of all persons associated with our own institutions.
- ❑ Contact your Senators and Congressional representatives to urge greater US leadership to address climate change and to provide significant economic and technical support to developing countries. Read Safe Climate Act (H.R. 5642) introduced by Henry Waxman and companion bill in the Senate, Global Warming Pollution reduction Act (S. 3698) introduced by Jeffords and Boxer by going to <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/c109query.html>
- ❑ We also strongly urge you to assist your bishop in sending a cover letter and a copy of the bishops' statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good*, to your members in both the House and Senate. <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm>