

**COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN  
BISHOPS' CONFERENCES (CCEE)**

**CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN  
CHURCHES (CEC)**



**Environment and Development  
A Challenge to Our Lifestyles**

**June 19-25, 1995**

**Orthodox Academy of Crete**

## Introduction

From June 19-25, 1995 fifty-three representatives of churches and church-related organizations from twenty-two European countries and consultants from Canada, the Philippines and Chile met in the Orthodox Academy of Crete near Chania for an ecumenical consultation on "Environment and development". The meeting was organized by the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) in cooperation with the European Ecumenical Organization for Development (EECOD).

The point of departure for the exchange was the European Ecumenical Assembly "Peace with Justice" held in Basel in May 1989. Recently, CEC and CCEE called a second European Ecumenical Assembly under the theme: "Reconciliation A Gift of God and Source of New Life". It is scheduled to take place in Graz (Austria) from June 23-29, 1997. It is our hope that the reflections and conclusions contained in this report will be a useful contribution to the preparations which churches and church-related organisations and movements are making for this assembly.

The churches' awareness of the ecological crisis has grown considerably. At our consultation, we have been impressed by the wide range of responses which churches, recognising the urgency of the issue, are making. Many churches have done important studies and are engaged in stimulating Christians to respond positively to their responsibility towards creation.

The consultation grew out of a three-year process evaluating the churches' activities with regard to 'Sustainability and Development'. Two regional pre-conferences were held with representatives of churches in the countries of the European Union and Switzerland, and of Central- and Eastern Europe. The first of these focused on a report of the European Ecumenical Commission for Church and Society (EECCS) on sustainable development, which will also be transmitted to the Commission of the European Union.

At our consultation five working-groups dealt with the following themes:

- Theological considerations on sustainability
- The role of the churches
- Economic models and lifestyles
- Energy and climate change
- Tourism and environment.

The reports of these working-groups, together with the papers presented to the consultation, will be published in the proceedings of the consultation. Among concerns raised in keynote addresses and working group sessions, the theme of "lifestyle" emerged as one of the most crucial issues for the churches. For our common report we therefore decided to focus on the challenge to our lifestyle. The urgent need for reconciliation between industrialised and developing countries, between rich and poor within each country, and also between humankind and God's creation as a whole impels the churches to encourage Christians to rethink their very way of life. A sustainable society requires sustainable lifestyles.

We present this statement to the churches and all who share concern for the future of the planet in the hope that the challenges will be met with practical responses.

We concluded our consultation on June 24, the day when Christian churches commemorate the birth of John the Baptist, the prophet who announced the coming of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. His testimony of conversion and purification is of particular relevance today because, just as the European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel had already forcefully underlined, it is only through a fundamental change (metanoia) in our lives that any solution can be found.

## **1. Sustainability**

How do we understand the term "sustainability"? The task is not to provide a theological undergirding of the current use of the term. Rather we must interpret, in the light of the Scriptures, the challenge posed by the ecological crisis and identify the criteria which must guide our response. What, then, is a correct reading of the signs of times?

For the churches it is essential to recognize the magnitude and complexity of the challenge and to resist any temptation to discount the problem by excluding certain aspects from consideration. The ecological responsibility of human beings is inseparably linked to a strong commitment to justice and peace in a sustainable society. A focus on ecological aspects must not ignore this wider context.

It has become more and more clear that there are limits to human expansion on planet Earth. There is mounting evidence that some human activities already exceed the limits of the carrying capacity of parts of the environment,

the damage to the stratospheric ozone layer for example. In many other areas, limits are likely to be reached in the foreseeable future. In general, we are now coming to realise that, for many human activities, there is a scale which should not be exceeded. We are therefore faced with the daunting task of establishing indicators of permitted human expansion. The concept of environmental space has recently gained ground: it points to the limited carrying capacity of the Earth and establishes that all people must be given the right to equitable shares of these limited resources.

Although we still need to understand much more about the effects of human activity on the environment, this does not mean that we can delay our response. We underline the importance of the "pre-cautionary principle". This means that where there is a serious risk of harm to the environment we cannot afford to wait for a high degree of scientific proof before acting to prevent damage. We also need to remember that sustainability is a "moving target": limits to human expansion cannot be fixed once for all. We may be led in the future to new and serious risks, with both positive and negative consequences. We must leave room for what is yet unknown.

For the churches, sustainability is inseparably linked with a renewed call to justice. Threats to the environment must not be used as a pretext for maintaining the present unjust distribution of the goods of the Earth. Sustainability presupposes willingness to share the gifts of creation within the limits imposed on humanity. The fundamental needs of all must be met.

The calling of the churches includes responsibilities towards and advocacy on behalf of those suffering today from exploitation and poverty. It also includes concern for the life of future generations: they should inherit a planet whose resources allow them to develop and enjoy life with dignity.

Realizing a sustainable society, then, requires a radical change of direction. When terms like "sustainable growth" or "sustainable development" are used, often the assumption is made that the present course of society can essentially be maintained. We understand sustainable growth to be a contradiction in terms, in the long run, especially with the rapid increase of the world's population; human demands on creation must not grow, but be reduced. Human life in ecological balance is only possible if the rich are prepared to accept for themselves a new quality of life.

For the richer industrialized countries the challenge is particularly demanding in view of the need for economically weaker nations to improve their situation. They must be given the opportunity of pursuing economic growth.

Among the issues which most challenge our present patterns of life we mention our energy consumption as an example. The emissions of greenhouse gases, especially through the combustion of fossil fuels, exposes us to the risk of far-reaching changes in the climatic conditions of our planet. In order to mitigate the effects of global warming, drastic reductions of our energy consumption are required. In 1990 the Second World Climate Conference declared that in order to stabilize atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations at about 50% above pre-industrial concentrations by the middle of the next century, a continuous world wide reduction of net CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by one or two percent a year starting from now would be required. As the responsibility for these dangerous emissions at present lies mainly with the industrialized nations, their reductions must be even higher. At present, the industrialised nations are causing the majority of these emissions, and have the resources and technology to curb them. Meanwhile, given their legitimate desire for development, developing nations are expected to significantly increase over the next decades their emissions. Together, these factors place a responsibility on industrialised nations to reduce their emissions more than the average. Population growth will further increase the pressure. In the light of these prospects, it is clear that many activities now taken for granted in industrialized countries are, in fact, not sustainable. This is particularly true for present patterns of mobility in Europe, especially the steady expansion of road and air transport.

Sustainability presupposes peace and at the same time conditions it. Conflicts and wars represent an acute danger not only to human life but also to the integrity of the environment; they therefore must be avoided on this ground as well. The over-exploitation of our planet's resources is itself likely to lead to conflict. The 1995 dispute between Spain and Canada over fishing rights was an example of this kind of tension. In several regions, the scarcity of water supply has been a cause of hostility. Such disputes may eventually escalate into armed conflicts. Sustainability therefore requires a commitment to both justice and peace-making.

## 2. The Special Responsibilities of European Countries

The process of economic development in Europe, both East and West, over the last decades has caused environmental and human damage out of all proportion to our share of the world's land, resources and population. Moreover, there are unsupportable imbalances which can be recognised at several levels:

- between Western- and Eastern European countries, recognising that there are also significant imbalances among countries within both regions,
- between the rich and the poor within European countries,
- between most of the countries of Europe and developing countries, and
- between present and future generations.

Several examples illustrate these imbalances:

- approximately 36% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are produced by Europe, East and West, alone;
- despite the existence of international conventions, some Western European countries are still continuing to take unjust advantage of less stringent regulatory standards abroad by exporting hazardous wastes to Eastern Europe or developing countries, in exchange for hard currency, instead of managing their own wastes themselves.
- although the GNPs of most of the industrialized countries indicate economic growth, high levels of unemployment continue;
- while the European Union spent over 8.000 million ECU in 1994 on subsidies for the export of its excess agricultural produce, it spent only half this amount on development aid to the poorer regions of the world.
- Affirming the principle that a sustainable future requires an equitable sharing of resources, the countries of Western Europe must assume a special responsibility for making changes in their patterns and levels of growth and consumption. Eastern European countries need to act urgently to address their serious pollution problems in ways which would achieve environmental goals without causing undue economic destabilisation. In many cases this might be done in conjunction with Western European countries. The question of nuclear energy and safety is particularly critical.

It is now evident that the Earth could not support all countries of the world reaching the levels and patterns of production and consumption already practised in Western Europe. This situation again puts Europe in an unjust position of benefit and power with regard to the process of development. Such imbalances must also be regarded as present and potential root causes of international disorder and conflict.

Developing countries and countries in transition have a right to an equitable share of the common goods of the Earth. Their development cannot be guided by the unsustainable practices adopted in Western Europe. Rather, the most industrialised countries must reduce their demands on the environment, achieve environmentally-sustainable technologies and lifestyles for themselves, and, where appropriate, assist other countries to do the same.

With regard to the crucial issue of climate change and acid air pollution, for example, it is the clear responsibility of Western Europe to reduce drastically the demand for energy and the consumption of fossil fuels. It must also make every effort to improve and apply the appropriate technologies and infrastructure towards the implementation of renewable energy sources and efficiency measures. In addition, Western Europe must be prepared to share its best practices of efficient, renewable and sustainable technologies with the poorer areas of Europe and with the developing world.

Peoples in different countries and of different cultures need to be given the space to develop their own models of sustainable societies. Spreading a "western" model of society to Eastern Europe or developing countries through the use of development aid needs to be questioned. Participants from Eastern European countries strongly expressed the view that the consumption-based society characteristic of Western Europe at present is not the model they would wish to follow. They stated: "we hope to develop a more human society, to learn from the mistakes of the western countries".

### **3. Creation and the Human Vocation in Creation**

Although many churches have recently taken a clear stand on the ecological crisis, we are aware that the churches have generally been slow in responding to the threats to the environment. Except for the calls of a few prophetic voices, the churches have not been quick to sense the impending ecological disorder. Even today many churches do not recognize the urgency of a Christian response to the dangers and risks humanity faces. We are convinced that the Christian tradition both in the Bible and in the teaching of subsequent

centuries provides a basis and inspiration for an adequate theological and spiritual response. We are aware, however, of the fact that in recent centuries these resources have often been obscured by many churches. Through their teaching and witness, some churches have too often supported the notion of the human conquest of nature. Not without reason, in the eyes of many Christianity has legitimized the domination of creation by humanity. In this respect there is need for a return to the roots of Christianity in Scripture and Tradition and for a thorough renewal of theological thinking.

As we face the present ecological crisis we realize that we have sinned. Before God the creator and before our fellow human beings we confess our failure. We know that only through repentance, forgiveness and reparation will a new departure become possible.

As Christians, we may differ in our approaches to the theme of creation because of our differing traditions, teachings and theological assumptions. But as we engaged in exchange at our consultation we discovered that despite different theological frameworks we are agreed on certain perspectives and emphases. Whatever the starting point, we affirm:

God's continuing presence in Creation. God has not only called the universe into existence, God is present in its continuing life. We believe in the triune God Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God the Father who created the whole universe has revealed himself in Christ and is present through the Spirit at all times and in all places. God the Spirit who communicates the Gospel today was already present in the act of creation and continues to be the sustainer of all life. God cares not only for human beings but for all creation (Ps. 147,9). Destruction of creation is therefore disregard of God's presence: it is sin against God.

Human beings are not called to dominate the Earth but "to cultivate and guard it" (Gen. 2,15). In recent times the emphasis was often placed on God's command in Genesis 1,28: "fill the Earth and subdue it". This phrase was interpreted to mean that human beings were called to "conquer and complete creation"; they were to be stewards in God's creation. We have come to realize that this interpretation needs to be corrected. The primary calling of human beings is to praise God and to serve the human community in obedience to God's creative will, lifting the world up in an eucharistic offering. They are part of the created world and are destined to live in companionship with all creatures. Humans must be respectful of the fragile equilibrium of creation.



We all agree that in order to provide an adequate response to today's ecological crisis a new understanding of the significance of the human person needs to be grasped. Created in the image of God, human beings enjoy the gift of freedom. They are therefore capable of having a destructive impact on creation as well as making a positive impact. Through the misuse of their freedom and the fall they become a cause of suffering and conflict. As they allow themselves to be renewed by God's grace, they can live in peace with creation. The healing of creation begins with personal purification and with healing within community. The theme of the Second European Ecumenical Assembly, "Reconciliation Gift of God and Source of New Life" is therefore relevant to this question. God's gift of reconciliation in the first place establishes peace where there is antagonism and hostility among human beings; but it is also the basis of a more respectful relationship with creation.

As we discussed the role of human beings in creation, we once again became aware of the profound relevance of the biblical commandment regarding the observance of the Sabbath. This commandment occupies a central place in both Testaments. The commandment establishes an explicit relationship between God's act of creation and the human use of time. "You have six days to labour ... but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God ... that day you shall not do any work, you, your son or your daughter, your manservant or your maidservant, your cattle or the alien within your gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and on the seventh day he rested." (Ex. 20,9-11). The seventh day is God's permanent invitation not only to humans but to all creation to participate in God's joy. Through Christ's coming the Sabbath has acquired additional meaning the celebration of the seventh day has shifted to the first day. We now celebrate Christ's resurrection from the dead, the gift of new life in anticipation of God's kingdom.

In the Old Testament the rhythm of Sabbath extends to the sequence of years. Sabbath and Jubilee years provide an occasion to restore the communion with God, with one another and also with creation. (Lev. 25) At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus, referring to the tradition of the Jubilee year, "proclaims the year of God's favour" (Luke 4,19). He brings the deepest intentions of the Sabbath and the Jubilee years to their fulfilment.

#### **4. Steps towards Sustainable Societies**

It is widely recognised that industrialised countries need to reduce drastically their consumption of natural resources. But how can this be done in a market

system based on economic growth? Does not economic growth necessarily mean a growth in the consumption of natural resources? Or are there forms of growth of a qualitatively different nature?

Several proposals have been made of measures which would move us towards sustainability. In our view they should not be regarded as alternative steps but rather as complementary measures.

a) In the first place means need to be developed which allow for a more efficient use and re-use of natural resources. Large reductions in the consumption of resources and especially of energy can be realized in this way. But to achieve this requires a myriad of small steps involving a progressive reconception of the way we use resources. Some of this will require new technologies to be developed, but in the main it is a question of more careful use of what we have already, be it improved management changes, product design, waste re-use and recycling, monitoring and numerous other measures. This "efficiency revolution" could lead to a very considerable reduction in our consumption of natural resources, and especially of energy. Most of this potential has yet to be realised, since it requires not only changes in industrial and personal practices but a shift in priorities. Inevitably, this is a slow process, and to be effective it also requires substantial economic and fiscal measures in support. Particular attention needs to be given to less industrialised societies so that as they develop and use more of the earth's resources they will be able to meet their needs in an energy- and resource-efficient manner. This can only be assured by the willingness of the developed countries to agree to the transfer of the appropriate technologies.

b) Another proposal would include the environmental costs incurred by human activities in all economic assessment. At present the true price of production is not recognized by the economic system because it does not take into account a number of "side effects". To a large extent, the cost of waste disposal and environmental damage is still covered by the community. Many natural resources like the air and the sea are considered to be "common goods" as if no price were attached to them and therefore no charge is made for polluting or misusing them. The price of an air-ticket, for instance, does not reflect the cost of the pollution produced by the aircraft. On the contrary, many countries even subsidize the fuel used by the airlines; in other words, these governments financially support environmentally-damaging activities. In our view, the "polluter pays principle" should be adhered to as strictly as possible. Moreover, if environmental costs of fossil fuels were included in the price we pay for them, it would greatly boost the prospects for energy efficiency measures and

renewable energy technologies. Renewable energies currently compete from a position of serious inequality against more cheaply-priced coal, oil and gas. This is one of the main factors which holds back the efficiency revolution.

c) There is also an urgent need to measure in new ways the performance of the economic system. The most widely used criterion, the Gross National Product (GNP), does not give an adequate picture of the actual costs of economic activities. Environmental damage and pollution are difficult to assess in financial terms. What is the price of a destroyed forest or an exterminated species, for example? Despite the difficulties of measuring the true costs of human activities, efforts in the direction of "green accounting" can decisively contribute to changing people's perception of the present situation.

d) In order to reduce the exploitation of natural resources, a distinctive price mechanism in the form of environmental levies should be applied. In the market economy decisions are dictated by demand and prices are assumed to reflect scarcity. Certain natural resources have in fact become now rare goods; they should therefore be protected by environmental levies. Increased prices will in turn act as an incentive to identify and apply more efficient methods of production. Internationally agreed standards of use will evidently be required in order to achieve the necessary prices levels. International conventions are a vital instrument in this respect.

e) Another important shift with regard to consumption could be achieved with the aid of a new tax system. At present taxes are primarily based on human labour. From the environmental point of view, the use of resources and energy should be taxed as well.

f) Unemployment is one of the major issues faced by European countries. It has become clear that this phenomenon is due to more than a temporary economic turbulence. The dilemma is manifest: on the one hand, technological innovation leads to the redundancy of many jobs; on the other hand, if increased production is regarded as the main way of creating jobs, this is not ecologically sustainable. This crisis may partly be overcome by the creation of environmental jobs. Strategies of renewable energies, promotion of sectors such as ecological agriculture and public transport, environmental protection and recycling can give new opportunities for constructive work. Other measures such as shortening daily work hours and job-sharing will contribute to mitigating the devastating effects of unemployment. Instead of continually pressing for further economic growth alternative approaches should be

explored. Employment and environmental protection need not to be mutually exclusive.

Measures such as these imply not only new concepts of society but a change in one's mind-set. They can only be realized if current definitions of wealth, freedom and quality of life are rethought. To advocate a lower dependence on the finite resources of the earth and nevertheless promote adequate standards of living for all requires a new sense of solidarity. On the one hand, they presuppose a commitment to the preservation of ecological goods like pure water and air, nourishing food, pleasant land- and seascapes, and abundant and diverse fauna and flora. On the other hand, they imply a critique of some predominant values, such as the acquisition and accumulation of material goods, and a narrow definition of private property. At present, industrial production is geared to produce goods which satisfy supposed needs while the advertising industry seeks to stimulate consumption rather than conservation. These tendencies affect both West and East. In order to achieve the measures necessary for a sustainable society, a new understanding of quality of life and enjoyment must be developed.

Change cannot be imposed. The new orientation must grow out of an interchange between people. Putting into effect the necessary economic and political measures affecting lifestyle depends on the democratic foundation of and the degree of participation in each society. This process will require clear lines of communication between government and all sectors of society, and democratic forms of negotiation and decision-making in all spheres of society.

Churches can play a role in this respect by consistently emphasizing the need for a shift in moral attitudes and by promoting the values necessary for sustainable societies. Wherever possible they may join forces with people of other religions and other philosophical persuasions and seek to build up the consensus which is needed for change.

## 5. Our personal and communal lifestyle

Sustainability will, of course, have implications for our personal lifestyles. Although political and economic measures are indispensable, by themselves they will not achieve the necessary change. There are no "magic solutions". Every citizen is called to contribute to sustainability by his or her own way of life. What might such a lifestyle look like? We mention just a few characteristics:

Since present levels of energy consumption cannot be maintained we must make every effort to avoid unnecessary consumption of energy. Some reduction can be achieved through energy efficiency measures applied to the home, community facilities and places of work, but ultimately a different way of life will be required implying a reduction of heating, lighting, use of appliances, machinery and so on.

Campaigns of personal environmental commitment, in which individuals pledge to reduce their personal energy consumption by 2% annually within the next ten years, have been launched in several countries.

A new approach to mobility and transport must be found. For many reasons, present patterns of mobility are not sustainable. For most people, a responsible lifestyle will represent cutting back significantly on the use of their private car, and using public transport, cycling and walking instead. This may be painful, but it is one place where environmental concern bites hardest in our western way of living. Other measures include using less air transport, particularly for short overland journeys where the train would suffice.

In order to avoid unnecessary transport and refrigeration a new lifestyle will give preference to the consumption of local and seasonal goods.

Meat production is an inefficient way of using natural resources for food and is putting, especially in its modern forms of mass production, undesirable strain on the environment. A sustainable life style calls therefore for less meat consumption.

Every effort needs to be made to avoid waste. Generally, therefore, goods should be made to last as long as possible. We should return to a "culture of recycling and repair".

Above all, the new lifestyle should be characterized by a new use of time. In our use of time values like human relationships, community, care, loyalty to other people and respect for nature need to be given priority. A new use of time should integrate time for meditation and prayer.

In the present situation a lifestyle governed by such values stands in contradiction to general trends. Such a lifestyle may require a form of "exodus" from the dominant culture of consumption; it can only be achieved through resistance to the economic and materialistic pressures which influence the meaning and content of every individual's life. Paul's exhortation is relevant here: "Do not conform yourself to the schemes of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind; then you will be able to know the will of God what is good, acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12,2).

Such a change of lifestyle by no means implies a negative attitude to the goods of the world. On the contrary, it will help to open up new dimensions of human life and lead to qualitatively higher forms of fulfilment and satisfaction. In the first place it means "recapturing lost lands of freedom within ourselves" (Church of Norway report *The Consumer Society as an Ethical Challenge*). Conforming to the consumer society leads to dependence. Basically, the Christian tradition affirms the goodness of the world and welcomes the joys the world is capable of providing. But only in freedom can the goodness of the world really be appreciated; a freer lifestyle leads to a deeper quality of life. "If you enjoy spending time with your children, talking with friends, walking in the mountains, praying, singing ... in other words: if you enjoy simple joys, feel happy with yourself and others ... then you are a threat to the economic system behind the consumer society, for in all this you have not spent a single dollar! If you feel worthless, lonely and insecure, if you are always wanting more ... then the consumer society will find lots of sore spots to press on, offering you more and more consumption to fill the gap of your own discomfort with yourself and others." (Asle Finseth)

For Christians, the call to a new lifestyle has even deeper roots. As we listen anew to the Scriptures we realize that what is required for achieving a sustainable lifestyle coincides in many respects with the way of life implied in discipleship. When Jesus summoned the disciples to follow him he invited them to set their minds exclusively on the Kingdom of God. He consistently warned them against the accumulation of material goods. Christians are told to work for their "daily bread" and for the support of those living in poverty and need. Their primary concern is to serve the building up of the community. For centuries the churches took these values to be self-evident. Only in modern times have values like conquest, transformation and material growth made their way into the life of the churches as well. The impasse we face today directs us back to Jesus' original call for communion with God and with one another. Again, discipleship does not imply a negative attitude to the world. Christian asceticism is not a denial of the world. Rather, prayer and fasting and the voluntary limitation of consumption are the source of freedom and a greater capacity for love.

Thus, for Christians the ultimate motivation for a more responsible lifestyle is to be found in Jesus Christ. Through him we are freed for a life of praise to God and service to others. As we concentrate our minds on communion with God we are enabled to resist other demands all forms of self-fulfilment through power and wealth.

As we celebrate the eucharist the deeper meaning of Christian life finds expression in the signs of the bread and the wine: through them we receive the gift of Christ's presence and are called to share with one another. We praise God for his presence in creation and pray for the fulfilment of all things in the kingdom of God.

## **6. The responsibility of the Churches**

Only in recent times have many of the churches rediscovered their responsibility for the whole of creation and for future generations. Churches should proclaim a sustainable lifestyle with great humility in the awareness that for a long time they themselves have been part of the predominant, destructive way of living. However, churches cannot claim a monopoly of solutions, especially not those coming from the technical and scientific fields.

It is against this background that we ask: What can churches do in terms of their cooperative witness for a sustainable lifestyle? We wish to highlight some important challenges for the churches:

a) The churches have a prophetic responsibility; that is, they are not simply social institutions which behave according to their own laws. Their task is to listen carefully to God's message in order to address today's issues. In translating God's will for modern times, the churches must be open to the world. They must read the signs of the times, dealing with the suffering of creation and listening to people as they share their stories, experiences and knowledge. The churches' prophetic task is to proclaim God's message to the world, even if it appears to be inconvenient, because it challenges present trends and practices. However, not every message from the churches which contradicts present trends is prophetic: it is essential that the message has its foundation in Scripture and Tradition.

b) Churches also must proclaim a message of hope in the face of every sign of destruction. Many people today, especially the young, possess much knowledge and many insights about the distressing state of the planet. What is often lacking, however, is hope and a confidence in the future. Heightening people's fear and bad conscience may lead to paralysing frustration and fatalism. The churches' belief in the Kingdom of God, God's grace in Jesus Christ and the renewing capacity of the Spirit should be a source of joy, inspiration and encouragement.

c) The proclamation of hope will not automatically change in the present situation. Therefore, the churches must give a credible witness in their own daily life and should thereby be credible co-operators in God's ongoing act of creation. Recognizing their own weaknesses as well as their own responsibility the churches ought to be good examples in practising a sustainable lifestyle which reflects the wholeness and holiness of life.

d) The churches recognize the spiritual dimension of life. They should advocate worship as an integral part of a sustainable lifestyle. The eucharist, meditation and prayer are ways in which we listen to God, put ourselves at God's disposal, open ourselves to be filled with the Holy Spirit and are sent out on a mission of action for the survival for the whole of creation.

These challenges could, for instance, be met:

- by raising the awareness and commitment of believers with regard to their environmental responsibilities and capacity to act;
- by celebrating creation, through worship and liturgy, intercession and preaching; elements of worship should aim to link creation more clearly with daily life;
- by education and formation at all levels in the church, including the training of believers, teachers and ministers;
- by dialogue and co-operation with other religions, especially insofar as Europe is increasingly made up of multi-faith societies;
- by dialogue and co-operation with non-governmental organizations, governments, universities, and so on, in view of the extent of common interests concerning ecological responsibilities;
- by promoting ways of implementing Agenda 21, the action programme for the 21st century adopted at the United Nations Conference for Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio 1992, involving families, parishes, churches, local communities and the society as a whole;
- by promoting everyday measures for environmental protection, the prevention of biodiversity, energy savings and systematic environmental auditing in parishes and all church-related institutions;
- by taking ecological considerations into account in all church-related activities including, for example: construction of buildings, management of lands, organization of parish centres, energy and resource consumption, and production and disposal of wastes;
- by promoting together with others the national and regional implementation of international ecological standards and conventions and resisting environmentally harmful actions such as nuclear testing.