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CLIMATE CHANGE SUMMIT

**“FIDELITY AND RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE CLIMATE STABILITY IS
A DUTY FOR US ALL”**

- 1 **GREETINGS** - May the peace and love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Let us exchange the sign of Peace, so as to be at peace with God, ourselves, our families, the environment and our planet.
- 2 **WARM WELCOME** - I extend to all of you present here a warm and prayerful word of welcome, dear participants and delegates from all over the world. This is the most important summit yet to address this very important challenge of climate justice. As we start this meeting, may God be the beginning and end of what we do. May He prompt our actions with His grace and bring our meeting to a fruitful end, with positive results.
- 3 **CLIMATE JUSTICE** is all about building peace and justice. It is about reconciling ourselves with God’s creation which God put under our care. Consequently we all have the duty and obligation to be God’s stewards and care takers for His creation. In the Book of Genesis we are reminded of the responsibility which God entrusted to humanity to take care of the environment which God created. Read Gen. 1:26-31.
- 4 **GOD’S EXISTENCE** - Some people do not believe in God’s existence! In the years of the 1960s, there was the theory of the “BIG BANG” which states that at one time in history there was a big bang and things emerged as we see them today, the waters, the seas, the islands, the continents etc. For those who entertain such a theory, I remind them that nothing can ever make itself bang!! A window for example cannot make itself bang! It is either the wind, a person, a cat or someone else who bangs it, to enable it to be banged!! Consequently even if a big bang ever took place, the planet could never have made itself bang! If it banged, then some Superior Being must have done it! This Supreme being is whom we believers call GOD. So whether you like it or not God exists.

A just reflection on the issue of climate change, should begin with the origin of creation, God the Creator of Heaven and earth. The opening words of the Book of Genesis in the Bible tell us that before God began his creative work, “the earth was a formless waste and emptiness” (void) (Gen.1: 2. In Hebrew the words can be translated as “**Tohu wa bohu**”. The precise translation of the phrase is difficult; but biblical scholars tell us that it can also be translated as **chaos** and **disorder**. In six days as it is narrated in the book of Genesis, God turned this “chaos and disorder” into an ordered and beautiful universe and earth (Cf Gen through the process of climate change 1:4, Gen 1:10, Gen 1:12, Gen 1:18, Gen 1:21, Gen 1:25, Gen 1:31). On the sixth day God created man and woman in his own image (Gen.1: 27 and entrusted them with “dominion” over this ordered and beautiful creation. (Cf Gen 1:28-29).

Today we are harvesting the conscious or unconscious irresponsible actions of man and woman that are threatening to turn God’s well ordered and beautiful creation into “chaos and disorder” through the process of climate change, especially through the emissions of greenhouse gases, like carbon dioxide, which artificially warm the atmosphere of the earth.

Prophet Isaiah has a terrifying and eloquent description that can be used to describe the effects of climate change though, most probably, he might not have had it in mind at the time. “The earth dries up and withers... The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed laws, violated the statutes...” (Isaiah 24:4-6).

All this is a reflection of mankind’s poor stewardship of God’s well ordered and beautiful creation. Therefore if man and woman have helped to cause the problem of climate change, we are also responsible for reversing it and mitigating its effects especially among the poor nations of the world, who are affected most even though they contribute least to this phenomenon.

In order to reverse this situation, there are a number of things we must do. I will mention only three.

(a) First we must first of all acknowledge that “the earth is the Lord’s and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1). Man is only a steward and must be a faithful and responsible steward. And as Pope John Paul II noted,

“When man turns his back on the Creator’s plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace...” (John Paul II, 1990 World Day of Peace Message, no. 5).

(b) Secondly, we must realise that climate change has not only an international but it also has an individual, local and national dimension. Therefore it calls for a multilevel coordinated response, with mitigation and adaptation programmes simultaneously individual, local national and global in their vision and scope.

(c) Thirdly, climate change should not be seen only as an environmental concern but also as a growing threat to sustainable development and poverty eradication and reduction in the context of other problems facing the world today, especially in Africa.

Climate change is threatening to return the world to the pre-creation status, namely “chaos and disorder” through man’s reckless and careless “dominion” over creation. All of us stakeholders need to shape a wise and careful approach consistent especially with the principles of faithful and responsible stewardship of creation for the sake of the current and future generations.

- 5 GOD’S CREATION IS FOLLOWED BY A SPECIFIC DESTINY** - God’s creation is followed by a specific destiny which we have heard of in the first reading from the Book of Isaiah 48:17-19. God reveals Himself as Yahweh our God. God invites us to be responsible creatures and to listen to Him and follow His commandments, if we follow his statutes the consequences of all this will be prosperity and justice. Then the saving justice from God would flow like a river, Isaiah says. Our descendants and offspring would be many like sand. Our presence on earth would never be cancelled or blotted out from God’s presence, because of their hard-heartedness. Jesus condemns His contemporaries! We too to-day, are like children shouting at each other, blaming each other for the negative effects of climate change. Let this talk stop and let us all unite to respond effectively to the challenges of climate change

The effects of climate change are already a daily reality for many

people, particularly for the world's poorest and most vulnerable. It is indeed unjust that we the poor bear the greatest consequences of climate change while we have done the least to cause it. This focus on justice lies at the heart of the commitment of the world community to fairly and concretely address the climate change crisis. In fact without justice, there can be no sustainable solution to this global threat! Developed countries have a particular obligation, strength and opportunity to create clear policies, and clear moral arguments that transcend narrow personal and national interests in favour of the common good that will effectively and concretely drive political, economic and social action to a just and peaceful direction.

World leaders have spoken enough and have made promises that remain to be fulfilled but now what the world is waiting for is concrete action to implement their promises so that they stand by their promises to improve upon the environment.

6 WAY FORWARD:

In my local language we have a proverb which says “Agali Awamu ge galuma enyama” Teeth united together are able to eat meat, one tooth alone cannot! (Narrate Ezekiel's story at Mirembe Maria).

The agenda for Copenhagen is not to debate but to take action. The talking is over. We all by now know the science of climate change. We all see the threat which global warming is causing us. Now it is time for action. The Kyoto Protocol is set to expire in 2012. Time is running out to approve a more effective and equitable agreement, one that could put the world on the path to a safer future in which water will be more plentiful, and damaging storms and natural disasters less frequent. There are other reasons to cut carbon emissions. 1. To create clean energy jobs. 2. Ease political tensions tied to oil. 3. Other forms of pollution. 4. To save money through energy efficiency.

But ultimately, we need to act because if we fail to do so, science tells us, that we're committing ourselves to an unstable and dangerous world in which geographic and economic security, not to mention the health of other species will be at stake.

If we do not act today, we will fail to safeguard tomorrow for everyone's children all over the world. The problem of climate change is not only a matter of economics, but it is also ethical, spiritual, pastoral, political, and also technological. While maintaining reasonable economic growth, alternative energy sources capable of providing many times the energy need to be developed.

Our political leaders have a serious responsibility to save this planet by tackling global warming through concrete action that will do good to humanity as opposed to empty promises or agreements and moral posturing that merely makes us feel good, but either means nothing or has little chance of being fulfilled.

Let us pray for our world leaders, that they effectively guide their National Parliaments and pass just and favourable climate-change legislations that are environmental friendly, reduce greenhouses emissions which are a threat to public health. Let us improve and promote technologies that favour the reduction of global warming.

May God transform our lives so that we find God's light in our darkness, seek solidarity in our emptiness and recover wholeness from our brokenness as a result of climate change.

Amen