

HE Archbishop Seraphim of Zimbabwe

Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

## The Voice of the Orthodox Church on Global Climate Disruption

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Global Climate Change has been on the Eastern Orthodox Christian agenda for over twenty five years. In 1989 Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios began to raise the alarm when he observed that “scientists... warn us of the danger of the phenomena of the greenhouse whose first indications have already been noted.”

Since that time, Orthodox leaders have taken strong positions to address global climate change.

Foremost among the voices describing the urgency of climate change is His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. Three years ago at the United Nations Summit on Climate in Durban, South Africa, His All-Holiness declared climate change is much more than an environmental issue. “We are dealing with a profoundly moral and spiritual problem.” Therefore he asked the leaders gathered for COP-17 to contemplate the following three challenges:

“(i) A first challenge is *to surmount national and regional considerations*. Climate change is a global problem.... Any solution demands the ability to think for the whole world.

“(ii) The second challenge is *personal sacrifice*. *Sacrifice is needed to arrive at a successful conclusion*. When will we sense that the continent [of Africa] that has scarcely contributed to global warming is bearing the most repercussions, even though it is the least equipped to cope with its consequences?

“(iii) A third challenge is *moral leadership*. Global climate change presents an unprecedented threat to ... life on earth. At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we have already denounced ecological abuse as sin against God; we should recognize how it is also a crime against humanity....”

“The moral leadership that is required is a commitment to become the solutions that we advocate. We humbly invite all of you... to make a personal commitment to transform... the details of daily life, especially in the way we deal with energy and relate to the poor.”

The Orthodox Church calls us to live more simply. In a letter to the 2013 Warsaw Climate Summit, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew brought a further cause of climate change into focus: “Excess consumption.”

Humanity’s reckless consumption of earth’s resources threatens us with irreversible climate change. Burning more fuel than we need, we contribute to droughts or floods thousands of miles away.

To restore the planet we need a spiritual worldview which cultivates frugality and simplicity, humility and respect. We must constantly be aware of the impact of our actions on creation. We must direct our focus away from what we want to what the planet needs. We must care for creation. Otherwise, we do not really care about anything at all.

In our efforts to contain global warming, we are demonstrating how prepared we are to sacrifice our selfish and greedy lifestyles. When will we learn to say: “Enough!”? When will we understand how important it is to leave as light a footprint as possible for the sake of future generations?

It is not too late to respond. We can still steer the earth toward a suitable future for our children. But we can no longer afford to wait. Together with our political leaders we must act with urgency. Deadlines can no longer be postponed; indecision and inaction are not options. We have choices to make. The time to make a commitment to heal the earth is now.

*Climate change affects everyone. Unless we take radical and immediate measures to reduce emissions stemming from unsustainable... excesses in the demands of our lifestyle, the impact will be both alarming and imminent.*

- HAH Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

*Measures must be taken to reduce our impact on the world’s climate.... At minimum, this means caring about the effect of our lives upon our neighbors, respecting the natural environment, and demonstrating a willingness to live within the means of our planet.*

- The Orthodox Bishops of America  
Climate statement, May 25, 2007