



# Conference of European Churches

*Conference of European Churches  
General Secretariat*

Mr Herman Van Rompuy  
President of the European Council

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## **Engagement, education and ethics - inseparable elements of climate policies** CEC response to the proposed EU climate change policy for 2030

Dear President Van Rompuy,

Climate change is a threat to the world. Climate change is closely linked to the principles of the functioning of modern societies, in particular with the ever increasing demands for energy, its supply and consumption. We acknowledge and appreciate the genuine interest of many national governments and the EU to play a leading role in tackling climate change and in proposing policies leading to significant reductions in GHGs emissions.

### **Need for ambitious targets**

In its last report the IPCC reminded us that current commitments aiming to avert the devastating impacts of climate change in the coming decades are far from sufficient. We believe that the core of tackling climate change is ambitious, fair and a binding global agreement to which the EU will contribute by its leadership, as well as committing itself to fair and large-scale domestic targets.

Taking into account scientific data, as well as the EU's own commitment to reduce CO2 emissions by 80% before 2050, the proposed EU 2030 target for reducing CO2 emissions by 40% reveals only minimal aspirations for remaining on track for the long-term target in 2050. Even if this were achieved, we can expect vulnerable communities to face significant suffering. **We urge the European Council to be more ambitious** in the final decision shaping the EU climate and energy policies and to unfold, in particular, the full potential of energy efficiency, energy saving and find efficient ways for substantially reducing energy demand.

### **Fairness and justice**

As the last IPCC report recalls, climate change is directly related to the **accumulative nature of CO2 emissions** in the atmosphere. A just and fair response to climate change requires that the **suffering of those victims of climate change who have contributed the least to the current threat** be taken into account. The EU and industrialised countries of the world need to acknowledge and take responsibility for their historical emissions thus attempting to bring justice to the table. At the same time, it is important that the EU will play its part in ensuring that industrial countries fulfil their promises to contribute to the Green Climate Fund. We believe that **justice is an inseparable dimension of the considerations on climate change** from the perspective of future generations as well.

### **Need for new thinking beyond market solutions and principals of growth**

An effective tackling of climate change has to go beyond this. As the IPCC report emphasised, **only a total shift to low-carbon generation can effectively tackle climate change**. Improving energy efficiency in using fossil fuels will be not sufficient. It has to include, as its essential element, a shift towards transition, fresh **understanding of the limits and**

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**capacities of growth based economies**, as well as much more cooperation between states and non-state stakeholders. The EU must promote green jobs and a revival of sustainable production of goods locally rather than imported from developing countries.

**Economic issues and the ever present drive in human nature to consume and possess more must not refrain us from putting together effective policies on tackling climate change.** Political decisions responding to climate change need to take into account a wider context than the pursuit of profit and unlimited economic growth. In particular, we urge the EU to withdraw investments in fossil fuels.

**Engagement of citizens, education and ethics**

No single country can respond to climate change adequately or on its own. A **community approach is inevitable**. The new EU policies on climate change have to be based on effective and equitable cooperation. They also have to put in place efficient financial mechanisms in order to create a pool of resources to assist those EU Member States that bear a disproportionately higher burden towards a common and effective EU climate policy.

The proposition of cooperation and a community approach is valid in the global framework as well. We urge the **EU to continue to play a leading role on the global stage**. This should include providing structured packages for tackling climate change in developing countries, supporting them in developing local solutions and sustainable food production, playing a leading role in the preparatory negotiations before the COP meeting in Paris 2015 and in integrating ambitious, fair and binding targets in climate policies in the discussion on SDGs within the UN framework.

Finally, the EU needs to develop measures for inspiring and **engaging its citizens**. Climate change policies must not be targeted only at industrial activities. **Climate change is a result of a dysfunctional mindset that demands ever increasing consumption in our households and individual lives**. This drive has to be addressed at its root level and not just dealing with its consequences. Although science and technology play a significant role in responding to climate change, relying on them alone will not be sufficient. Addressing ethical issues, educating and involving people are musts in climate programmes.

**The role of churches and faith communities**

Increasing number of churches in local regional, national and international levels, together with other faith based organisations, are actively involved in supporting an active approach to the protection of environment, promoting disinvestment in fossil fuels, reducing CO2 emissions and working for a low carbon and sustainable future. European Christian Environmental Network and the Conference of European Churches are committed to tackling climate change and urge the EU to take ambitious and just decisions when formulating climate policies.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Liagre,  
General Secretary

CC: European Council  
European Commission - DG for Climate Action  
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*The Conference of European Churches (CEC) is a fellowship of some 120 Orthodox, Protestant, Anglican and Old Catholic Churches from all countries of Europe, plus 40 associated organisations. CEC was founded in 1959. It has offices in Geneva, Brussels and Strasbourg. CEC links member churches and associated organisations with the European Union's institutions, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, NATO and the UN (on European matters). Its task is to help the churches study church and society questions from a theological and social-ethical perspective, especially those with a European dimension, and to represent common positions of the member churches in their relations with political institutions working in Europe.*