

Appeal to the leaders and representatives of Indigenous Peoples and faith communities Storforsen, Sweden

Introduction

Meeting on Sami Territory in Sweden, October 5-8 2015, we – participants attending the conference on the *Future of Life in the Arctic – The Impact of Climate Change. Indigenous and Religious Perspectives* – appeal to the leaders and representatives of Indigenous Peoples and faith communities to call on your fellow citizens; your public representatives; your delegates to the Paris Climate Conference; Mary Robinson, United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy on Climate Change; and Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to take brave action and make bold decisions on promoting climate justice.

Future of life for the Arctic peoples

Climate justice for the Arctic is a spiritual issue, and the power to change comes from spiritual sources. Climate justice is intergenerational, needs to include the peoples of the Arctic, and calls for common but differentiated responsibilities.

Here in Storforsen we have shared stories on how climate change is affecting all forms of life in the Arctic. Both traditional knowledge keepers and scientists are describing the changes that are occurring.

We have been moved by the concerns youth have for their future and their cultural way of life. A melting Arctic is a melting future.

We witness the ongoing dispossession of the peoples of the land from the land and acknowledge the responsibility to include peoples of the land in decision-making that affects the future of all.

We see the connection between the suffering of the land and its effects on traditional livelihoods, the mental health, identity and well-being of all who live there.

We know that climate change constitutes the single most important threat to food security due to the changed and changing environment, disrupted migratory patterns, and the high cost and limited availability of market foods.

People of the North are witnessing these changes. Their stories are a testimony of the relationship between humanity, land and the Creator.

The ancestors and Indigenous Peoples bear witness to a worldview, spiritual relationships with the land, animals, water, and the Creator, and traditional practices. We believe these are indispensable resources for addressing climate change.

Spiritual nature, respect for creation

All the land, all the cosmos is sacred, a sacrament, infused with meaning. Each being has a purpose. This is the soul and spirit of the land and all life. The purpose of each human being then is to be a responsible caretaker. All human beings are called to this priestly vocation.

Our traditions stress the interconnectedness and the solidarity between humanity and the living Earth. It is our hope that we can change and make peace with each other and with the creation. The spiritual resources and

traditional knowledge of the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic can serve to overcome the climate challenge we are all facing today. Our spiritual traditions and ancestral sources tell us human life is open to the possibility of transformation.

The wisdom of the elders tells us that by forging good relationships with the Creator, each other and with nature, we enhance our capacity for peace, transformation and reconciliation. We believe the spiritual roots of climate change point to a need for this conversion, to repent from individual and collective patterns of consumption that put the creation and life at risk. There is still time to change but we must now hurry.

An essential framework and guide for political action on climate change and Indigenous Peoples is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2015 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document¹.

Some businesses operating in the Arctic, including shareholders and investors, also need a new influence: spiritual guidance in their investments and actions. Love of the land and respect for the land is a first principle of being for all. In this context we reaffirm the right to self-determination and self-government.

Faith, Love, Joy and Praise the Creator

We have gained a new respect for the interconnectedness of spirit and nature. For example, berry picking is itself a spiritual practice; it connects us to the land and its spirit. This seasonal and community activity illustrates and reminds us of the way to live together in our common home (*oikonomia*, economy, or rules for the household): sharing and equity, the participation of all, respect for the land, and the enjoyment of its fruits.

The gift of Indigenous worldviews enhances the possibilities of transformation through the acknowledgment of soul and spirit in all created life.

The recognition, respect and implementation of Treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements are a concrete commitment to the youth, Indigenous Peoples, and all peoples for the right to a future. We are working together for a world where healing, reconciliation and healthy relationships are present.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada affirmed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation, and its 94 *Calls to Action* are a model for the world. We see that protection from climate change is a collective right and responsibility.

Closing

Creation is alive with God and with the Spirit. Life is precious. The future of seven generations is at stake.

Therefore we also ask faith communities and people everywhere to rededicate themselves to stand in solidarity and support the peoples in the North, who are now already survivors and leaders in responding to climate change.

¹ UN Declaration preambular paragraphs 11, 14, 15; operative paragraphs 20.1, 25, 26.2, 29.1, 32.3, and 37; also the 2015 World Conference on Indigenous Peoples Outcome Document paragraphs 34, 36, 37.