

PRESS RELEASE

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Faith-based communities crucial to climate change movement says Mary Robinson

“Faith-based communities, which have been instrumental in global movements on poverty and debt relief, are a critically important part of tackling the problem of climate change” according to former president of Ireland Mary Robinson. Mrs. Robinson was speaking at an ecumenical prayer service in Christ Church Cathedral today Friday 11th December 2009 .

The service, which was organised by Trocaire, Christian Aid and Eco Congregation Ireland was held for Christians of all denominations to come together to pray for a fair and decisive outcome from the UN climate change negotiations that conclude in Copenhagen next week.

Speaking at the service Mrs. Robinson said “Climate change is already causing suffering around the world due to the effects of weather changes and ‘rogue’ weather events on food and water availability, sea level rise, health, and the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure. Climate change impacts significantly undermine the enjoyment of human rights, and these impacts will only increase. We must tackle the problem through a ‘climate justice’ approach that distributes the burdens of reducing emissions equitably, and prioritise the needs of those who are most vulnerable.”

Eamonn Meehan, deputy director of Trocaire said “rich nations cannot dodge our responsibilities if we are really serious about tackling climate change. While much of the focus on these UN climate change negotiations has been around reducing emissions targets, rich countries must recognise the damage we have already caused to developing countries that have been struggling to cope with the effects of climate change for almost a decade. Entire communities have been devastated by increasing drought and natural disasters and they need justice from Copenhagen. World leaders must commit to new financial support for developing countries to help them adapt and cope with this reality.”

Catherine Brennan SSL chairperson of Eco Congregation Ireland said “Our abundant and beautiful planet, God’s creation, is in peril today from climate change. This wounded earth, the peoples of the developing world and future generations are most at risk. We need to reflect on the need to live in more sustainable ways and for a renewed theology of creation. We earnestly pray, too, for wisdom, courage and compassion for our world leaders as they meet for the crucial summit in Copenhagen.”

Margaret Boden, chief executive of Christian Aid Ireland said "There are two key reasons why the crisis of global warming is first and foremost a justice issue. The first is that the people who are most vulnerable to its effects are those who have done the least to cause it. The second major reason is that it comes at a time when the world's richest nations have reached a peak of development. While it is well within the means of rich countries to maintain their current levels of economic activity while adapting to climate change, the picture is very different for poor countries. It is now time to establish a new social contract that leads down the path of poverty eradication and greater equality to sustainable development. That is why the talks at Copenhagen are important."

The service was organised by Trocaire, Christian Aid and Eco Congregation Ireland on behalf of Stop Climate Chaos, a coalition of development, environmental and faith organisations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in preventing further climate change.