

Pre-Copenhagen Consultation

On Wednesday November 18th 2009, forty JRI associates and invited guests met at the Arthur Rank centre in Stoneleigh for a Pre-Copenhagen Consultation. John Weaver chaired the consultation, and introduced it by saying that there would be input from four speakers in the morning, but that in the afternoon everyone would have the chance for interaction and there would then be a report back in a plenary.

Sir John Houghton (President of JRI)- The Challenge of Climate Change

Sir John began by saying that we live in very serious times and that it was good that we could spend some time talking and praying. Copenhagen has been called the most important meeting on earth - no meeting can be called this but it is very important indeed.

He wanted to start with a basic update on climate change, and then to look at some of the current issues. We should be caring for the poor and caring for the planet, but we are raping the planet and stealing from the poor.

The basic science has been known for 200 years. Greenhouse gasses warm the planet. Adding to these will increase temperatures and increase the activity of atmosphere. There is no doubt whatever about this- it is basic physics. CO₂ is most important greenhouse gas because it stays in the atmosphere for a long time. By mid-century some parts of the globe will rise in temperature by 3-4°C. The land warms more than oceans initially. The Arctic is warming most, and before 2020 there may be no Arctic ice left in September. It was predicted in the 4th IPCC Assessment Report that this would happen before the end of the century, but it is now thought to be likely within 10 to 15 years. This shows how fast the research is changing and how the predictions are becoming increasingly serious. Some of the impacts are likely to be:

1) *Heat waves*. In the 2003 heat wave at least 20,000 people above average died. At the time Sir John called it a “weapon of mass destruction”. Careful studies showed that this heat wave was at least 75% caused because of the increase in greenhouse gasses.

2) *Sea level rise*. Bangladesh is an example of problem with climate change. We are expecting one metre of sea level rise this century (0.5 m due to expansion of water), but 10 million people in Bangladesh live below this level. Where will they go? The Indians are building a fence on the border with Bangladesh because they have anticipated the problem. 25 million people are in a similar situation in China. Often saline intrusion into aquifers is a problem that happens before flooding occurs. The salty water is not good for agriculture.

3) *The hydrological cycle*

Increasing temperature means more rainfall. Rainfall is increasing, which means more floods. At the same time it is also getting hotter, and the dry air means more droughts. All of this is bad news for those in subtropical parts of the world.

The most frightening statistic Sir John knows is the incidence of drought. Work at the Hadley centre suggests that now 2% of Earth is experiencing extreme drought. 20 years ago was %. By 2050 will be 12%.

4) *Environmental refugees*. Droughts will last for years and will displace many people who will not be able to live in their homes. There could be hundreds of millions of environmental refugees. What will happen to all these people?

5) *Biodiversity loss*. There may also be the loss of millions of species that will not be able to adapt to the rapid changes in climate.

History

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The objective outlined at Rio was to stabilise CO₂ in the atmosphere. This set in motion the process that led to the Kyoto Protocol. The Rio agreement was signed by George Bush Sr. On behalf of the United States and by other nations. Then a campaign of misinformation began, particularly by Exxon, and some large coal companies. First of all they said climate change was not happening and then that we can cope with it. As a result most countries have done almost nothing to cut emissions.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its last report in 2007. The IPCC are our very best climate scientists and the report is the place to go for information. It has been endorsed by academies of science around the world.

Two Degrees Target

If we do nothing then later this century we could see a global temperature rise of between 4 and 6°C. The consequences of such a rise would be disastrous, and were well outlined by Mark Lynas in his book *Six Degrees: Our Future on a Hotter Planet* (Fourth Estate Ltd, 2007). The aim must be to keep global temperature rise below 2°C, which will cause some damage, but will not be as severe as higher temperatures. Action must be taken to decrease emissions from buildings, electricity, agriculture, transport and deforestation (this will be important at Copenhagen).

Can we make the 2 degree target?

This will be a big challenge. Climate change is only a part of the problem of sustainability. We must peak global emissions by 2016 and then steadily bring them down, and by 2050 developed countries need to cut to near zero emissions.

The world has got the money and needs to use it. The latest *World Energy Outlook* from the International Energy Agency (IEA) was released 10 November 2009. This says that cutting carbon emissions won't cost anything because we will save so much as a result. Emissions are complex because so many of our goods are now produced in China and so those are our emissions and not theirs. Which are the developed countries in terms of their emissions? These are issues for Copenhagen to sort out.

Overshoot

What happens if we overshoot on carbon emissions and temperature? Can we come back? No! This is because CO₂ falls very slowly. The global average temperature will hardly go down for centuries (see: Solomon S. *et al.* (2009) Irreversible climate change due to carbon dioxide emissions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* **106**, 1704-1709.). So it is no use imagining we can come back, as that will be extremely difficult to do. This is a very strong message to get across to the politicians.

Christian Perspective

Christians should be concerned not just about big power stations in big countries but rural areas in poor countries. We need to have local generation of energy that is renewable (e.g. solar and biogas). This will help to keep people in small communities rather than migrating to huge cities in countries such as China. The Copenhagen conference has to sort out the emissions allowance for difference countries and for shipping etc. Recently, Sir John was asked to speak on "What would Jesus say at Copenhagen?" at Wimborne in Dorset. There is a moral imperative: we in the rich world have grown wealthy because of fossil fuels. We did not realise the damage we were doing, or that it would land disproportionately on poor countries. Our imperative is to care for the Earth and for the poor. Recently Sir John has been raising the moral imperative with help from Bishop James Jones (See: An Urgent Call to Prayer and Action-<http://www.jri.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/Copenhagen-statement-7.11.09.pdf>). They are really concerned about the United States who have most emissions per head and yet have the capacity to do something about it. The United States and China have just met. If they got together and led the world in Copenhagen than the rest of the world would follow. The problem in the United States is that Congress is blocking climate change legislation unless China and India do so. This is the moral low ground and is against the convention that the United States signed years ago. They have been badly affected by the misinformation campaign, and it is not all their fault.

Rick Warren (who said the prayers at the inauguration of Obama) sent a direct reply to the letter from Sir John and Bishop James. He said that it

was marvellous timing because he was going to the White House in a few days.

Sharing

We are good at doing this in our families, our communities and nationally. Internationally we give aid. BUT if we add aid and trade together the net gain is to the rich, and that should make use all blush with shame. We need to share as we have never shared before.

Luke 12: 48 *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*

Ann Pettifor (Executive Director of Advocacy International)

Ann began by saying that it was a great honour to follow Sir John's presentation.

The present campaign on climate change reminded her of the Jubilee 2000 campaign. The big concept at the heart of the campaign was the idea of stocks and flows. The poor countries owed money (\$300 million), and this was the stock. They were paying back money each year (\$30 million), and this was the flow. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) focussed on the flows, and said it was easy to give them financial aid to pay off that flow each year. There was more in aid than flow. Jubilee 2000 and Ann focussed on stocks because these were hanging over countries and taking energy out of them. The IMF and World Bank would not accept it. Supporters of Jubilee 2000 became “ballistically motivated”. They did things that nobody thought could happen and in such a short time frame. So there is hope that we can do things on climate change in a very short space of time. Christian influence has not always been good, but it can be huge.

History

It is 500 years since the birth of John Calvin. Ann grew up in S. Africa in the Reformed Church. It was a big church with big pews and pulpit. The preachers distorted what Calvin had said. The Afrikaners regarded themselves as the chosen people and were privileged because they were white. It was a frightening type of faith. As Ann grew up she became aware of the Christian message about equality, “love our neighbours as ourselves”, and became angry with Calvin. Luther did not agree with lending but Calvin said that not all kinds of usury and lending were bad. After this lending on interest was allowed for Christians.

Now we have built up the most massive amount of debt without any relation to reality. We also have massive ecological debt. Ann wanted to argue that these two things are linked. Environmentalists tend to get into a silo about climate change. With finance get into another silo and we don't link the two.

In fact easy finance has funded, easy consumption and this has funded 'Easy debt'. Until we make these links we cannot go forward.

Lifestyle

We need to make a complete transformation of lifestyles and start living the future - as if we did not have fossil fuels available. Christians have a duty to play a genuinely evangelical role to show people how we can live the future. There is no mission more important. We have to deal with our economy and our ecology. We will have to live more locally, and not live beyond our means and our boundaries. People will experience this as a sacrifice. We will give up fresh beans from Kenya in winter and live on turnips and cabbage. People will experience that as debt. But we will experience our sense of community by living more locally. It is a profoundly optimistic message that we have to offer, but it is hard to do in the midst of a financial crisis.

The model of Christ

We should model ourselves on Christ when he turned over the money tables in the Temple. This is especially well described in John's Gospel. How calculated Jesus was as he went and got the cords to make a whip, and whipped the money lenders and overturned the tables. There was calculated and righteous anger in his act. What Ann finds is a lack of righteous anger from Christians today because of the easy money that has fuelled our over rich lifestyles.

The Financial Times is a good source of information, but it has a colour magazine, "How to spend it", with adverts for yachts, gold watches, fashion and property. As the financial crisis has deepened so the "How to spend it" magazine has increased in size and frequency. Millions of people are being put on the scrap heap and families falling apart, but consumerism continues unabated.

Brian Griffiths, international advisor of Goldman Sachs, was given a platform by St Paul's Cathedral on 20th October 2009 to talk about financial issues and the morality of the marketplace. He felt that inequality was something that we have to live with to have an economy, and was part of prosperity. Ann remarked that there was "No one there to get a whip to whip him out". People get obscene money, and Sachs were gambling with their clients' money. Then came financial crisis and they ran to the state and demanded insurance cover. They gained this money and changed from an investment bank to a holding bank. This attracted the protection of the state. Then the Federal Reserve and the Bank of England dramatically reduced interest rates. Banks can borrow at 0.25%, way below the level for the ordinary person. So now all the banks are again gambling on the market for gold, currencies and stocks and shares, which have shown the fastest rise on record (62%). People are getting are getting fabulously wealthy and there is no one to chase them out of the Temple which is our democracy. Indeed banks have taken over the Treasury. UK Financial

Investments (UKFI) chief John Kingman is close to moving to NM Rothschild, the independent investment bank. The treasury has turned into a private investment fund. The tax payer is not in this business. We need to be able to invest and expand in things that will help mitigate climate change, but because Treasury is now a private bank in how it is running this is unlikely. When lending to others the interest rate is at 8%, which generates excessive returns. This means workers have to make more for less; Brazil will have to dig up more trees etc. There will have to have ecological repayments. This is why there is such a link between finance and ecology.

John Calvin led a transformation in how we thought about money. Christians can do that again. But we can only do that by modelling Christ in the Temple. We need to do that in the way we respond to sport, arts, politicians, and democracy. We need to chase the money lenders out.

Richard Weaver (Tearfund Senior Policy Adviser - Climate Change and Disasters)

Richard said he would look at the impact of climate change on the poorest people and say a little about advocacy. Tearfund was the first NGO to get involved in the climate change negotiations and continues to play a leading role alongside Oxfam, WWF, Cafod etc. Tearfund has been involved in each of the UN conferences since 1992. It is also involved with partners on the ground. They have real expertise in lobbying their own governments. Tearfund are taking people from Nigeria, Bangladesh and other countries to Copenhagen next month.

Tearfund also lobby governments in West and support representatives from most vulnerable countries in their policy analysis and negotiations. Many countries don't have much power or people to do the job of representing them. Against us are delegations with several hundred people. These are very complex talks and need lots of people but most vulnerable countries just don't have that. The Tearfund role is to bring the voices of the poor and most vulnerable to the civil servants.

Effect on the Poor

India - rainfall no longer marks the difference in seasons. Climate change is poverty for years to come.

Bangladesh - almost half the population live below the poverty line. Because of sea level rise many of the aquifers in coastal areas have become very salty, and this reduces the available fresh water for agriculture. The other issue is flooding. This is too much to cope with for Bangladesh itself and external assistance is needed.

Malawi – a typical example is the farmer, Andrew from Fombe. Fombe's inhabitants, like 80% of people in Malawi, scrape survival from the soil: they eat what they grow. Andrew's scenario reveals the reality of being poor and living with climate change. You go hungry.

Nepal - now it rains when it used to be dry and is dry when it used to be wet. This affects growing of rice.

The developing countries are already experiencing impacts from climate change, and the survival of these communities depends on the energy of the developed countries to support them. Tearfund can't address climate change in isolation and also needs to look at environmental degradation. Climate change is happening faster and things are much worse than we thought. The 2°C aim is even more important. Higher than that and we will see dangerous feedback mechanisms. We must avoid 4°C. We have a perfect storm in increasing population, urbanisation, poverty and climate change. Energy, food and water all need to be addressed. Demands are increasing and by 2030 in Africa yields could decrease by 50%. Further problems include malaria, water stress, sea level rise, flooding and salinization.

Policy debates

In Bali in 2007 COP 13 agreed that there should be a new post 2012 climate agreement by Copenhagen in 2009. There have been lots of negotiations in 2008. There was a disappointing COP in Poznan, Poland where there was a loss of trust by developing countries. The USA and EU fear being overtaken by China and not just about climate change. Richard has been at least 8 weeks of negotiations when he has been very tired. Negotiations are deadlocked because of the lack of ambition of developed countries. These need to commit finance and science. There were many other meetings outside the mainstream. In June Gordon Brown called for a climate change fund to help the developing nations. The G20 provided extra money for developing countries. In July 2009 the major industrial nations accepted that 2°C should be the upper limit. China has made a commitment to reduce emissions, but the EU has struggled to come up with a figure for finance- a total but not enough. It is not clear how much the EU contributes and how much each country pays. There have also been summits with India and China. Two weeks ago the most vulnerable countries had their own summit in the Maldives, and they came up with a challenging commitment that they will go carbon neutral.

Tearfund have been engaged in lots of discussions, for example with the Department for International Development (DFID), the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), and in meetings with MPs, ministers and the Prime Minister.

Key issues for climate change agreement:

It must be a fair and ambitious binding agreement. It must be fair to all countries and must safeguard the climate. There must be midterm (2020) and long term (2050) emission reduction targets for developed countries. The agreement must keep global temperature rise to below 2°C, and emissions must be below business as usual. Finance is not just short term, but long term is a real need for developing countries.

There are not many models for low carbon development. We are not doing it ourselves in the developed world and for the developing countries to follow. The finance looks big but set against recent bank bail outs is not that big. The cost of action getting lower and cost of inaction is getting higher relative to each other. The agreement needs to be legally binding. This is because there is a lack of trust from the developing countries, as they feel promises have not been kept.

What are we heading for? Some governments are downplaying Copenhagen by aiming for a “politically binding” rather than a “legally binding” agreement. We need political commitment and a Copenhagen decision, but the best that developed countries are aiming at is a pointer towards 2010. The African countries and China want something legally binding as do the small island states, Bangladesh etc who are very vocal. But the developed countries have been lowering expectations.

A good deal is still possible. Saying it isn't just make failure more likely. Around 40 head of states have said they will come, but in some cases they are only committed to coming to a dinner! We need ministers and heads of state be there to make a deal. World leaders will not go to Copenhagen and say it is a failure, and so will want to report whatever is decided as a success. Many are engaged in expectation management to lower expectations so that whatever will happen it will look like a success.

So don't give up hope for a fair, ambitious and legally binding deal. US say they are not ready for Copenhagen and don't have domestic legislation in place. We really need to see Obama showing the leadership he promised on climate change. Things looked bad in the months coming up to Kyoto, but an agreement was made, and that may happen again. Yesterday China and the US (the G2) made a positive statement, but did not call for a legally binding deal from Copenhagen.

Summary

When you look at Copenhagen it will only be a good deal if it is good for the poorest communities. So a strong adaptation component is needed. Both long term (2050) and short-term (2020) emissions targets are needed. We also need near-term and long-term finance and support, and a financial architecture that is fair to all and seeks to give continued support to the least developed countries. The world is still waiting for the action needed to avoid a catastrophic change in our climate.

Ben Niblett (Tearfund Campaigns Team Leader)

Ben wanted to talk about the response - what people can do and how you can persuade more people to do more. What does it take to motivate people? Facts alone rarely get people to take action.

We need to campaign because we can't solve the problem by just giving money.

We work with business people and politicians, sitting down with them, giving alternative actions, and lobbying. Behind this we need prayer and a loud noise of people. When Jesus threw people out of temple there was a crowd behind him. Ben's job is to provide a crowd. For this we need a coalition, Stop Climate Chaos, which represents more than 11 million people. Over half of the population of Scotland represented.

The Wave

The biggest ever climate change demonstration on December 5th 2009. This starts with a service in Westminster hall, when both the Archbishops of Westminster and Canterbury will attend. This tells the media and politicians that Christians care about climate change. After the service is the march which gathers in Grosvenor Square at 12 noon and starts at 1.00pm. At 3.00pm there will be a Wave around the Houses of Parliament. After the march there will be tea with Tearfund at the Mothers Union. It will be a great march with so many different groups united – Women's Institute, Surfers against Sewage, many church groups and environmental groups, trade unions, and other faiths.

What else?

This is just one rally, but how to you motivate people to take action and why is the church well placed?

1. Hope - there is hope. It is not too late to prevent us getting over the 2 degree threshold.
2. Threat – climate change is a huge threat to most aspects of our existence, and to most parts of our lives. Most people don't realise how imminent it is. It is happening now and having an impact and so we need to act.
3. Vision- we need a vision of how the world should be. The kingdom of heaven is not the way things are now, but is where there is justice and where we will live sustainably. This is the bigger vision of which Copenhagen is just one step.

We will judge Copenhagen on whether it does what we need - 2020 agreements, binding agreements, plus money for adaptation.

We need to give people a clear story, which is as simple as possible but no simpler.

What is Copenhagen, what is needed and why?

Ben gave us three images:

- a. Climate change as an environmental issue? Polar bear on a melting glacier.
- b. Development impact of climate change? A farmer on cracked earth or river bed.
- c. Impact of climate change on us in the UK? Often don't know what that picture looks like? Floods, and the breakdown of society?

4. Deadline - we have a very sharp deadline.
5. Success- we need to give people hope that we can do this. NB treaty of Montreal and the phasing out of CFCs. Plus our governments climate change act.
6. Make it fun - make marches like carnivals. Make it like the church flower rota - campaigning is so normal that it is like the flower rota.
7. Sacrificial- needs to be possibly sacrificial but definitely fulfilling.

We should pray and we should feel more hopeful than anyone else.
When you look at the banners - the church is often the back bone of these events.

Not all campaigns are rallies - other examples include:

- a. Sending messages to politicians, especially if you can do it face to face. Or send post cards like Act Fast from Tearfund.
- b. The Climate Justice Fund - help churches work out how big their carbon footprint is and pay an Anglican diocese in Africa to deal with the damage there.

Superbadger – if you are on Facebook then you can campaign from your computer. See <http://apps.facebook.com/superbadger/>

Finally compare this with the campaign against slavery - this took 30 years and we can't take that long. We need to be smarter and faster but we have had 200 years to learn so we should be able to do it!!

(All these notes taken by Margot Hodson, and edited and adapted by Martin Hodson- apologies for any errors!)