

Church observers unhappy with Copenhagen Accord: "A weak and morally reprehensible deal"

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Faith groups have expressed disappointment and anger over the outcome of the United Nations talks in Copenhagen on climate change, pledging to continue to press for environmental justice.

"With a lack of transparency, the agreement reached this past week by some countries was negotiated without consensus but rather in secret among the powerful nations of the world," the World Council of Churches' program executive on climate change, Guillermo Kerber, said December 21.

The so-called Copenhagen Accord was negotiated between five countries, the U.S., China, India, South Africa and Brazil. "It maintains that the scientific thinking for keeping temperature increase below 2 degrees Celsius is important, but failed to make commitments to reduce emissions to keep the temperature rise in check," said Kerber.

After the conclusion of the summit, Kerber asserted, "This has proven to be a strong strike against multilateralism and the democratic principles in the UN system."

Caritas Internationalis, a consortium of Roman Catholic relief agencies, and CIDSE, an alliance of Catholic development agencies, denounced the accord as "a weak and morally reprehensible deal which will spell disaster for millions of the world's poorest people."

A delegation that included the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu and other ecumenical leaders preached and marched during the 11-day meeting.

"Although this is not the first time an agreement has not been reached at a [climate-change] meeting," said Elias Abramides, who headed the WCC delegation, "this time

it was worse because of the lack of transparency and shadow negotiations by some countries without involving all.”

In Britain, the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches jointly condemned the world’s richest countries for not reaching a binding agreement.

“The failure by negotiators at the climate talks in Copenhagen to agree to cut carbon emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, after two weeks of negotiations, represents an immense setback for rich and poor countries alike,” said John Marsh, general assembly moderator of the United Reformed Church.

The WCC’s Kerber said, however, “The struggle continues. We need to build on the incredible mobilization by churches and the civil society over the next year, with prayers, bell ringing, and advocacy action, to reach a fair, ambitious and binding deal.”

John L. McCullough, executive director of Church World Service, said on his return from the meeting: “Regardless of the agreements, signed or not signed at Copenhagen, binding or not binding, this does not leave developed and emerging nations off the hook in terms of lowering greenhouse gas emissions.

“Nor is it a license for emerging nations to proceed with development without self-regulated, intentional measures toward greener development,” he said. –*Ecumenical News International*