

29 November 2015

Statement from Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and the Reverend Canon Mpho Tutu

COP21: HUMANITY'S LAST-CHANCE SALOON

COP21 is not just about the weather; it is a unique opportunity for the world's leaders to address global inequity.

It is an opportunity for powerful people and nations to acknowledge that their environmental wellbeing, their security and sustainability, is dependent on the wellbeing, security and sustainability of others.

The days of not understanding the disastrous human and environmental consequences of rampant consumptiveness and greed are gone. Our leaders can no longer claim not to know. If they don't take action they will be saying very clearly that they don't care.

Should they grasp the opportunity, and develop a legally binding treaty to mitigate climate change, it will signal the end of the age of reckless consumption, exploitation and greed.

Failing to grasp the nettle will send a direct message of contempt to poorer nations and people, who cannot afford the costs of mitigating the impacts of increasing temperatures. It will trigger unprecedented economic and refugee crises, and dramatically deepen global insecurity.

It's a simple equation, really. Agree on mechanisms to enforce adherence to environmental justice, or consciously embrace injustice and add fuel to the fire of human division and pain.

The science is clear. Reduce carbon emissions to limit the extent of global warming. The only way we can do this is by reducing our dependency on carbon fuels.

That is why we support the campaign to divest from fossil fuels and invest in sustainable technologies. Continuing to spend Trillions of Dollars searching for new oil, gas and coal reserves we will never be able to use is a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom.

And that is why we say: Global warming is the human rights challenge of our time. If we do not address it, collectively, it can only mean we have decided that the rights of some members of the human family are more important than others.

A narrow window of opportunity opens in Paris next week. No longer must our future be directed and dictated by financial interests. Let us follow the God that makes all things new. When we do that, we are filled with hope.

Anything less than a legally enforceable treaty on carbon emissions will be to condemn our children to inheriting a disfigured world and a blighted human family.

For an extended version of this statement please visit <http://www.tutu.org.za/cop21-humanitys-last-chance-saloon>.