



Statement of the Asian Ecumenical Women's Pre-Assembly (AEWA)

Asian Ecumenical Women: Journeying Towards the Renewal and Restoration of God's Creation

26–28 September 2023 | Chaitanya Centre, Kottayam, India

(1) We the delegates of the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly 2023, coming from 21 different countries across Asia, belonging to various churches, languages, cultures and traditions, met together to deliberate on the CCA Assembly Theme 'God Renew us in Your Spirit, and Restore the Creation' with special focus on 'Women journeying towards the Renewal and Restoration of God's Creation'.

(2) We met at Chaitanya, Kottayam, from 25–28 September 2023 and amid its natural and serene beauty, we contemplated on how vulnerable our beautiful planet is to the disasters caused by climate change and global warming. We deliberated on the crux of the issues of climate and gender justice, the severity of the impacts of climate change that make creation groan; vulnerabilities and capabilities of women and girls in Asia in the face of climate emergencies; sharing of best practices and advocacy for climate justice, through Bible studies, thematic presentations, and group discussions.

(3) We the 63 church women who have gathered here from all walks of life, as mothers, sisters, and daughters, affirm that we were created in the image of God, giving us grace, and gratitude to celebrate life in its abundance; and strength, courage and resilience in times of hardship and sorrow. We praise and thank God for the beauty of creation and for giving us the privilege of caring for it.

(4) But we confess that humankind has not cared for the earth with the self-sacrificing and nurturing love that was required of us. We mourn the broken relationships in creation, we repent for our part in causing the current environmental crisis that has led to climate change. We pray to the Creator God to guide us and show us the way to restore and sustain the creation.

(5) Acknowledging with humility the fact that humankind has tried to wield power over nature, we urge that because the earth is our only home and the home of all other beings as well, we must share the space with other human beings, other animals, and the natural world. Our theologies should speak within our earthly context, about our interrelationships and interdependence with all other creatures on our planet as well as our important differences, including responsibilities, from other lifeforms.

(6) Realising that the problems of poverty, injustice, radicalism, and ecological crisis are caused by human greed, or attitudes that reflect a strong desire to gain and to accumulate materials and power for oneself or for one's group, churches should commit themselves to promoting a spirituality of moderation, which is based on the theological understanding that God provides enough resources for all the inhabitants of this planet.

(7) We accept that there has to be a radical transformation of dominant cultures of consumerism, profit accumulation, marginalization, gender inequality, and exploitation of nature in order to secure the sustainability of this planet, and thus prevent the collapse of civilization.

(8) The climate crisis impacts different groups differently, including on the basis of gender. We lament the grave injustice that those historically less responsible for global emissions must bear the brunt of the climate crisis. And yet these people in the Global South, not least in South and South-East

Asia, are the least equipped to lower their emissions.¹ Furthermore, it is women and girls who are affected most by the impacts of climate change.

(9) We pray for a renewal of the spirit of God in us, so that women draw from the wellsprings of their inner being, their strengths and their capabilities to restore and recreate a world of Inclusivity that embraces all of creation and gives equal opportunities to everyone to decide on what is best for them, a people who celebrate and preserve earth's Diversity and a community of communities that work together in solidarity.

(10) To this end we urge women:

- To adopt a spirituality of moderation, simplicity and an attitude of compassion, concern and understanding towards humankind, especially the poorest of the poor who struggle to live in a world of imbalances and inequalities; and towards all other lifeforms that share the Earth's benevolence and abundance;
- To take up the struggle for justice and equality with the courage and righteous indignation that Jesus showed while evicting the traders who adopted unhealthy practices in the house of God;
- To educate and equip themselves to create awareness in children, the family, their immediate neighbourhood, the community and beyond;
- To equip and educate women, youngsters and peer groups with the basics of disaster management that will help them to cope with disasters not only for themselves but for the community;
- To sensitize themselves and others on governmental policies and laws on the protection of the environment and with regard to the challenges posed by climate change;
- To bridge the intergenerational gap with love, concern and empathy that understands and addresses the conflict between older schools of thought and the adventurous and forward-thinking perspectives of younger generations;
- To seek solutions from traditional cultures but also to maintain a healthy balance and appreciation for the new technologies that the younger generation is more comfortable with and that present opportunities for innovative responses;
- Advocate for the safety of Internally Displaced People, especially women and girls who have to migrate due to environmental disasters;
- To network with other groups, social activists, and NGOs to be forerunners and leaders in the campaign against climate change and environmental care;
- To believe that God is in charge, **to give thanks**, declare God's loving kindness in the morning, and faithfulness every night. Psalm 92:1-2

(11) We urge the Churches to:

- Give priority to discussions on climate change and be inclusive in these discussions as many have not heard of climate change;
- Continue biblical and theological research and education to articulate the mandate for climate and gender justice and to identify new and additional paradigms for urgent action;
- Promote spirituality and action, inspire dreams, combat dominance and greed, and overcome the fear of loss and sacrifice;
- Promote sustainable lifestyles that are appropriate to each context;
- Sensitize the congregation on the issues and problems of climate change, in Sunday sermons, prayer meetings, and publications;
- Teach environmental care in Church-run institutions;
- Establish and affirm committees for action on Climate Change;
- Monitor the implementation/violation of environmental protection policies and laws;
- Advocate for and work together with the Government in the implementation of such policies.

¹ EmPower: Climate Change and Gender Justice. 23 June 2022. Published online by UN Women Asia and the Pacific.

(12) We urge CCA and other ecumenical organisations to:

- Unite with the grass-root member churches and organizations to raise awareness; advocate change in lifestyles and enhance preparedness in times of disaster;
- Cooperate with corporates and other high-level agencies in times of disaster and to prevent disaster;
- Publish guidelines on eco-friendly churches, and conduct more in-depth studies, the results of which can be shared worldwide;
- Develop mutual accountability mechanisms between CCA and member churches and organizations, which may include self-assessment tools such as adapting the Pacific Conference of Churches' **Gender Status Card** to the Asian context;
- Establish a dedicated Commission on Climate Change, focusing on the vulnerabilities and capacities of the marginalized, the women and children and the economically weaker sections of society.

(13) We the ecumenical women of Asia are convinced that as half the population of the world is spread across Asia, any remedial measures in terms of lifestyles; best practices on waste management, rainwater harvesting, use of alternate sources of energy; switching over to safer and cleaner farming by banning fertilizers that poison the soil and water and harm children; inclusiveness and a stop to exploitation of nature and our ecosystems, will make a huge impact, giving an Asia Model for the world to appreciate and adopt.

(14) We affirm that throughout the history of the world, women have stood up and faced the challenges of 'life and living' and will continue to do so as the spirit of God permeates our being, imbuing/restoring in us love, compassion, and courage.

(15) We acknowledge that the journey is not easy, it cannot be accomplished on our own and that it will take time, nevertheless, let us go forth as sisters in cooperation and faith in our journey towards the renewal and restoration of God's creation and to be co-creators of a new Heaven and a new Earth!