

Pastors Vow to care for the Environment

1. Is our planet under serious menace? If yes, to what extent? Whose responsibility is it? And what to do? Actually, are developing countries in general and High Learning institutions, Churches and civil society organizations concerned by climate change and global warming? Experts on environment and climate have persistently voiced about the menaces on our planet of global warming, the build-up of greenhouse gases [GHGs] risk to reach an irreversible state. Drought conditions jeopardize access to clean drinking water, fuel out-of-control wildfires, and result in dust storms, extreme heat events flash flooding ; heavier rains cause streams, rivers, and lakes to overflow, which damages life and property, contaminates drinking water, creates hazardous-material spills, promotes mold infestation and unhealthy air whilst lack of water is a leading cause of death and serious disease.
2. The harm made to the environment has deepened larger and it challenges the nations of the world, from international level, national and on community level for practical solutions. From an African perspective the idea of relational harmony, liturgically proposes the interdependency of the whole creation that holds only when we respect the integrity of every creature. From the theological point of view, the new environment ethic must be formulated having in view that: We are bound together with the soil; we care for the creation; we search for a New Alliance that considers the Mosaic Law that prioritizes the jubilee for people, the land, the environment and the animals.

Through its annual Scientific Week 2018, and through many seminars under the program Sharing Knowledge with communities, PIASS intends to gather expertise from public agencies, academics and communities as well as those involved in the praxis for the mitigation of climate change and environment conservation. Pastors and community leaders, pastors' spouses, lay persons interacted and had fruitful discussions out of which they came to the following observations, then resolutions:

1. ***Learning from indigenous knowledge-*** In the care for the environment, the population of the Americas pray before cutting a tree whilst the population of the Pacific spell the drinks and food on the soil before eating as sign of recognition of the role of the environment in their lives. The participants welcomed the idea from the study to organize a celebration

of the interdependence between human beings and the ecosystems in an effort to protect and sustain the environment.

2. ***Rest of the land-*** As human being was given the Sabbath, the rest of the land was also given as Sabbath in the mosaic law [Leviticus 25]. When the land suffer, degrades, it cries like all other victims of different forms of abuse. Rom 8 and Jn 1.14 remind that all the creation groan and wait for liberation. Therefore, liberation and salvation are not restricted to human beings but all creation.
3. ***God, Creator, owner and Host of the Planet-*** God is not only the creator of the earth, He is also the host. Once He has lent the planet to human beings, God becomes the guest; and yet he keeps full rights on His creation and may take it back, hence the obligation to care for it and remit it in the same conditions we borrowed it for next generations to enjoy as well. The study finds that we are special guests because we have special duties to care for the environment and the planet.
4. ***Challenge big Polluters and destroyers for our survival-*** Western multinational companies are the biggest destroyers of the environment of the African continent, exploiting savagely the equatorial forests, exploiting seas, natural resources and mining. And yet, astonishingly: a. the poor who collect wood for domestic energy are often targeted as enemy of the environment whilst, the Trumps' administration, the biggest polluter of the planet and environment destroyer took the decision to withdraw from the Paris agreement on climate change and global warming mitigation; participants told their disappointment that the world greatest home to greatest scientists and intelligent researchers would put at gross risk the survival of the planet.
5. ***Sustained fight against Plastics-*** Participants spoke out about domestic solid and liquid wastes that pollute environment. Plastics have become the major multipurpose commodity and yet, are among the biggest polluters and environment destroyer. Thanks to ban law in Rwanda as from 2003, the world is becoming more and more aware of the harm plastics cause.
6. ***Fauna, our friends-*** Participants also discuss about the findings of the studies about the origin of the conflict between human beings and animals due to both being carnivores

even multivores. Participants told their openness to adopt the example of Francis of Assisi who sealed friendship with the creation, considering the sun as a brother, the moon like his sister; and also Fioler who called the hyena his brother and would preach to birds. These few examples are an invitation to human beings of today, to wake up at their duty to care for the environment.

Questions to deepen the participants' understanding

1. ***Would the planet support fast increasing population on a continuous environment destruction?***- The handbook presented findings according to with the planet is about to be exhausted because of big and rapid increasing of the population. Further researches need to prove how much the planet is able to support, and awareness need to be raised for international community to set up strategies to prevent the worst to happen. If we want sustainable development, we ought to protect the environment
2. ***Would killing insects be a harm to environment?***-Churches, and institutions including PIASS must strive to eliminate all factors of pollution, global warming and threats to environment. Participants are not clear whether some of the insects and creatures that are threats to human life, like mosquitos, snakes must be protected or whether it is a sin to eliminate them.
3. ***Why Africa richest continent in natural resources is the most poor?***- It is a contradiction that Africa is the most rich continent in natural, environment and ecosystem resources, earth and underneath natural resources and yet it is the most impoverished continent. African population must wake up, work hard to first change the narrative, then invent their own future.
4. ***How to promote African friendly relationship to environment face to Western cultures mostly destructive?*** Participants discovered that the Western industrial nations belong to cultures that are destructive, disruptive, which destroy the create new narratives of the old, whilst the African cultures are the most keen to live in harmony with the environment, a value that needs to be preserved and promoted. With regard to the rest

of the land, participants discussed the pros and cost about the rest of the land in the case of the scary of land for agriculture and food security. They were challenged to pursue present day trends that would completely exhaust the land [in the case of Rwanda], or a cautious exploitation and usage of the land and strategy for the storage of the harvest to take people from one season to another.

Pastors' Vows to Care for the Environment by resolvingto:

1. **Preserve and care-** for the environment, because we realized that we received them as loan and we are requested to hand them back in the good conditions for the next generations to enjoy.
2. **Plant trees with the motto-** “ if you cut one you plant more than one”. They resolved to become friendly to the environment in the sense of “complementarity and mutual respect”.
3. **Protect the soil, fighting erosion-** planting trees beginning from the parish land and their own land so as to be models for the community. The resolution extends to creating gardens and fruit trees plantations so that the parish lands and our own homes look like small beautiful Eden Garden for our Christians and the neighborhood to enjoy and to immitate. They took it for a home work to tell people that care and preservation of the environment is a duty and responsibility to each Christian.
4. **Approach experts in land conservation-** and protection to request their availability to teach Christians in parish, through different assemblies and meetings, how to preserve their land; in that same process, pastors will improve in the knowledge they acquired during the seminars.
5. **Make sure that all development projects-** don't threat to environment because the consequences of the environment degradation overtake the benefit from any benefit from projects.
6. **Initiate environment clubs in our parishes-** Taking for example, existing groups and clubs, and starting with young persons, then adults.

7. ***Give support to the African worldview-*** sustaining the relational harmony between human being and the environment. The participants resolve to tell a clear message to those who have means to stop destroying the environment and pollution for a concerted effort to care for the creation as a legacy to next generation. In that regard, the participants resolve to make good use of the handbook from the seminars and prepare bible courses and teachings about our human responsibility to care for the creation.
8. ***As our homes become small "Eden gardens-*** initiate separation of solid and soft rubbish in our homes, and promote "***akarimak'igikoni***" and gardens with fruits plantation and vegetables.

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75 pastors from different protestant churches and 17 students of the final years in theology, attended the seminars, shared these knowledge and took these resolutions.