

**APPENDIX L**

**GLOBAL ANGLICAN CONGRESS ON THE STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION,  
HARTEBEESSPOORT, SOUTH AFRICA AUGUST 18 – 23, AND  
WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, JOHANNESBURG,  
SOUTH AFRICA, AUGUST 26 – SEPTEMBER 4**

In 1992 the UN Conference on Environment and Development was held in Rio de Janeiro. ‘Rio + 10’, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was forecast to be a ‘global gabfest’, a talking shop with no concrete results. A conference intended in part to curb global warming would generate 500,000 tons of greenhouse gases from its 60,000 participants. (In fact, fewer turned up and many, myself included, imposed a voluntary ‘carbon tax’ by funding environmental projects to offset the damage caused by our flights).

A lot of talking *was* done, much of it in private. Yet there were also real results as nations and leaders recognised that the problems our planet urgently faces are shared problems requiring shared solutions. In addressing the Summit, Tony Blair correctly identified the fundamental problem as a lack of political will. ‘We know the problems. We know the solutions. Let us together find the political will to deliver them.’ These problems include over-consumption in the rich countries, over-population in the poor, AIDS, lack of food, water, sanitation, employment and clean electricity. For different reasons, both the rich and the poor have degraded the land and over-exploited natural resources, polluted the environment and caused extinction of species at a rate unknown since the extinction of the dinosaurs.

The lack of will to change was especially evident among oil producers and consumers. The US and OPEC countries blocked agreed targets for switching to renewable energy. Global warming, caused principally by the burning of oil and coal, is forecast to change the climate and to flood some Pacific island states, destroying not merely the land but also people’s history, culture, roots and Communities. The President of Kiribati and the Prime Minister of Tuvalu pleaded with the Summit, especially the rich countries, to save their nations by curbing greenhouse gas emissions and setting targets for the adoption of renewable energy. Some listened: Russia and Canada announced plans to implement the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. Even Australia, formerly the US’s closest ally against Kyoto, is said to be reconsidering.

**THE GLOBAL ANGLICAN CONGRESS**

In April the Standing Committee nominated me as the Church of Ireland’s delegate to the Global Anglican Congress on the Stewardship of Creation. This was organised by the Anglican Communion Observer at the United Nations, the Ven. Tairnalelagi Fagamalama Tuatogoloa-Matalavea, (known, thankfully, as Fanga) who is herself from the Pacific island of Samoa. The Congress was held in the week before the WSSD and was attended by more than fifty people from twenty countries, including bishops from Uganda, Burundi, England, Australia and South Africa. The Chairman of the Anglican

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Consultative Council, Rt. Rev. Simon Chiwanga, visited, as did the Archbishop of South Africa, the Most Rev Njongonkulu Ndungane.

We gathered to study the Summit issues - water and sanitation, health and AIDS, food and agriculture, energy and climate change, gender and human development, biodiversity and eco-justice. We visited Diepsloot to meet South Africa's urban poor; and Magaliesburg Nature Reserve to encounter its natural riches. Our programme was punctuated by morning meditation and midday Eucharist when English interspersed South Africa's other languages.

We also prepared our response to what we heard. We drafted a letter to governments to be presented to representatives by those of us attending the Summit. We also drafted a letter to our churches. Although these letters have no formal authority, they are the agreed opinion of Anglicans from every continent except Antarctica and from the world's richest countries to its poorest. Copies were also sent to the Anglican Consultative Council, meeting this month in Hong Kong, asking it to endorse our recommendations.

### **THE LETTERS**

The letters are shot through with Christian teaching and Christian values and propose action based on these values. Just as John the Baptist emerged from the wilderness crying, Repent!, so the letter to governments begins: 'We desperately need a change of spirit'. It affirms that 'sustainable development cannot be defined in economic terms alone but must begin in a commitment to care for the poor, the marginalized and the voiceless. Therefore it is sustainable community we seek'....'The world primarily belongs to God and not to human beings....Human beings are expected to respond with gratitude and to hand it on faithfully and intact to generations to come.'.... 'We value life more than possessions. We value people, more than profits.' It ends with proposals which place the common good above the good of any and which recognise the intrinsic worth, of all life.

The letter to the churches reminds us that at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 'our Bishops again identified the environment as one of the key moral and religious issues of our time' and states that 'Greed and over-consumption ...must be transformed into generosity and compassion'.

### **THE SUMMIT**

In addition to government delegations, the Summit was attended by representatives of what the UN calls 'major groups' of civil society: women, youth, indigenous peoples, non-governmental organisations (including churches), local authorities, trades unions, business, science and farmers. The Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg has an overall capacity of 6,000. But in the conference hall itself there were only 150 seats for 'major groups', though one could follow the debates on CCTV.

There were six debates, each three hours long, over the first three days. First, experts presented an issue, such as water, health or energy. Next, representatives of the nine major groups debated the issue, admirably and provocatively led by Jan Pronk, Kofi

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Annan's Special Envoy to the Summit. Finally, governments responded to the debate. (Though Jan Pronk asked them to reply to the questions which arose from the debate, many simply read prepared statements).

The next two days were given over to statements by UN organisations (Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, read a statement, for example) and UN-accredited organisations such as the International Red Cross Committee. In the final three days, heads of state and government made their statements. I was in the conference hall to hear both Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern.

I tried several times to contact the Irish delegation in order to present the Anglican letter but was unsuccessful. However, with Terry Miller of the Church of England I attended the British briefing each evening. At one such meeting, Michael Meacher, the Minister for the Environment, was present. Afterwards, I asked his aide if I could present our letter to him. 'Would you like to make an appointment?' asked the aide.

So, the following day, Terry and I sat down to coffee with Mr. Meacher and explained about the Anglican Congress and the letter. Terry then proposed ways in which church and government could promote environmental protection. Mr. Meacher asked him to put his ideas in writing. Finally, I made a plea for global biodiversity, pointing out that, half of all species can be protected for \$50 billion, less than one-sixth of the EU's and US's annual agricultural subsidies and only one-twentieth of global annual military expenditure.

That was my only serious input into the political process. I considered that I was there principally to learn and to see what I could feed back into the Church of Ireland. In addition to the Summit, there were events all over Johannesburg, especially at the Global People's Forum twenty miles away where one could join in debates and workshops on subjects such as poverty, globalisation, human security and environmental justice.

### THE RESULTS

While the debates continued in the conference hall, the real negotiations and lobbying were happening elsewhere as governments and power blocs horse-traded the draft 'Plan of Implementation'. This seventy-page document, the subject of negotiation for a year, would become the agreed fruit of the Summit, an action plan (or, as critics claim, an inaction plan) intended to address concerns on poverty reduction and environmental protection.

The Plan of Implementation commits the international community to halving by 2015 the proportion of people without access to clean water or proper sanitation, to restoring depleted fisheries by 2015, and to phasing out toxic chemicals by 2005. On renewable energy, a 'coalition of the willing' led by the EU, emerged to speed up the switch from fossil fuels.

For the pessimist, the Plan of Implementation lacks binding agreements and is full of 'get-out' clauses such as 'as appropriate', 'where possible', and 'on a voluntary basis'. For the optimist, the Summit has given renewed impetus to issues of sustainability.

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Brazil announced that ten per cent of the Amazonian rainforest would be protected, something campaigners have long demanded. Gabon declared 30,000 sq. kms. as national parks. Greenpeace and business leaders together demanded that governments adopt a global framework on climate change. (It was the first time, joked a BP executive, that BP had occupied a Greenpeace platform).

Rio taught us that environmental and development issues were linked. Johannesburg has taught us that they are now two sides of the same coin. To protect endangered species, conservationists now provide economic opportunities for local people.

Bishops' Appeal works to eradicate poverty. But, unlike many species, poverty is not in danger of extinction. (The global target is only to halve the number of poor by 2015). Therefore, I believe, protection of biodiversity should now be a factor in Bishops' Appeal's work to support the poor.

If Johannesburg has awakened us to sustainable development, we can all help by living more responsibly and more reverently, by taking less from the earth and using it more wisely, and by renewing our commitment to the poor. We can also lobby to keep these issues before our politicians for, as one in the Republic recently told us, there is 'More to do'.

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