

Resolution on Global Warming and Endangered Species

Passed by the Rabbinical Assembly in 2005

WHEREAS the Rabbinical Assembly has always based its environmental resolutions on the principles of:

- Responsibilities to future generations: "Therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:20),
- Integrity of creation: "The human being was placed in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it" (Genesis 2:15), and
- Equitable distribution of responsibility and protection of the vulnerable: "When one loves righteousness and justice, the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Eternal" (Psalm 33:5); and

WHEREAS in December 1997, some of the nations of the world gathered in Kyoto, Japan to develop a treaty with binding commitments to address the threat of climate change; and

WHEREAS the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a group of over 2,000 climate scientists from around the world charged with evaluating the data on climate change to inform the treaty negotiations, has documented a number of changes in the Earth's atmosphere that are attributed to human activity causing elevated levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gasses that are heating the earth's surface; and

WHEREAS about 160,000 people die every year worldwide from side-effects of global warming ranging from malaria to malnutrition and reduction of agricultural output in many poorer countries; and

WHEREAS an additional 80-90 million poor people could be at risk of hunger and malnutrition later in the 21st century and poorer countries are much less able to withstand the devastation caused by extreme weather events, and climate change is likely to increase such events; and

WHEREAS hundreds of millions of people will be at increased risk of malaria, dengue fever, yellow fever, encephalitis, and other infectious diseases because of global warming; and

WHEREAS climate change increases the likelihood of refugees from environmental changes and conflicts which arise from them; and

WHEREAS while the United States will likely have the resources to adapt to the impact of global warming, the poor even in the United States, as elsewhere, will also suffer disproportionately; and

WHEREAS up to 37% of land-based species could be committed to extinction by 2050, making global warming the largest single threat to biodiversity; and

WHEREAS the McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act would reduce the dangerously high level of current greenhouse gas pollution by scaling back emissions to year 2000 levels by 2010, creating a business-friendly design in which unused emissions credits can be bought and sold – which will have a positive effect on the environment, and will encourage American industry to be more innovative and cost effective, leading to further economic growth; and

WHEREAS the Rabbinical Assembly in 1998 adopted a resolution that called upon elected officials of governments of the world “to give a high priority to reducing the threat of global warming, and to pass legislation that will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions;” and

WHEREAS the Rabbinical Assembly in 1996 adopted a resolution that the Rabbinical Assembly “oppose any effort now in the United State Congress or in any state legislature to undermine the Endangered Species Act.”

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Rabbinical Assembly call on the United States Congress to take up the mantle of leadership on the issue of Global Climate Change and support the bipartisan McCain-Lieberman Climate Stewardship Act; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rabbinical Assembly urge the United States government to immediately adopt a variety of policies to accomplish such reductions, particularly:

- Programs that use pricing to lower demand for fossil fuels, encourage the development of non-polluting, renewable energy sources, and raise revenue for public projects, such as mass transit, that would lower carbon emissions.
- Standards relating to fossil fuel use, such as power plant emissions standards and motor vehicle fuel efficiency standards, should require the use of the most advanced fuel efficiency and emissions reduction technologies available.
- Such policies must be complemented with programs to help those who live in the United States whose economic security would be jeopardized by such policies, including assistance to poor people to compensate for increased expenses for electricity, fuel, and transportation and retraining and economic transition assistance for coal miners and other affected workers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rabbinical Assembly join with other organizations in urging institutions within the Jewish community to conduct energy audits of private homes and communal facilities, including synagogues, schools, community centers, and commercial buildings; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Rabbinical Assembly reaffirm its commitment to the Endangered Species Act as set out in its 1996 resolution which opposed any efforts in the United States Congress or in any state to undermine the Act, and calling on all members to contact their Senators and Representatives to support the Endangered Species Act.