

Protect the poor – from climate change policies

Cornwall Alliance works to ensure reliable, affordable energy for poor families worldwide

Paul Driessen

In a more rational, moral, compassionate, scientifically literate world, this Cornwall declaration would not be needed. It assesses the “far-reaching, costly policies” that the world’s governments are adopting, supposedly to prevent global warming and climate change. It calls on governments to focus instead on protecting the poor, who desperately need the affordable energy that those policies circumscribe.

The declaration was crafted by the [Cornwall Alliance](#) for the Stewardship of Creation. This coalition of theologians, faith leaders, scientists, and economic, environmental and policy experts is committed to safeguarding God’s entire creation: not just the Earth and its wildlife, but the people who also inhabit our wondrous planet, especially the poorest among us. More than 150 have [already signed](#) the declaration.

The declaration lists [ten reasons](#) to “oppose harmful climate change policies.” It notes that our Earth is “robust, resilient, self-regulating and self-correcting.” Its climate system will respond to and correct damage that might arise from the relatively small effects of carbon dioxide that we humans are adding to the atmosphere – compared to the numerous, complex, powerful, interacting natural forces that have always ruled our planet’s ever-changing climate and weather.

For one thing, crops and forests and other [plants will respond](#) to the extra CO2 by growing even faster and better, greening the planet and helping to feed wildlife and people. For another, as my extensive new [climate report](#) makes clear, the real world is simply not cooperating with the alarmists’ dire forecasts.

President Obama says climate change “will define the contours of this century more than any other” issue. Secretary of State John Kerry insists that climate change is “the world’s most fearsome weapon of mass destruction,” and poses “greater long-term consequences” than ISIL, terrorism or Ebola – even as ISIL butchers crucify men, *behead little children*, and promise to murder Westerners in their homes and streets.

Reality tells a different story. Not a single category 3-5 hurricane has struck the United States in nine years – the longest such period since at least 1900 and perhaps the US Civil War. Arctic ice has rebounded. [Antarctic ice](#) that is supposed to be melting is instead expanding to new records, “because of” global warming that’s supposed to be happening with increasing speed, but instead stopped 18 years ago. Sea levels are barely rising. Perhaps all this good climate news is due to our carbon dioxide emissions?

All these “inconvenient truths” are at the heart of the Cornwall appeal. Look first, it suggests, at actual, empirical, real-world climate observations. In almost every case they differ significantly from – or are directly opposite to – what the White House, Environmental Protection Agency, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and other alarmists assert and predict.

Second, the declaration implores, consider how anti-fossil fuel climate policies would affect the poorest and most vulnerable people on Earth. Then “abandon fruitless and harmful policies to control global temperature, and instead adopt policies that simultaneously reflect responsible environmental stewardship, make energy and all its benefits more affordable, and so free the poor to rise out of poverty.”

As UCLA emeritus professor Deepak Lal (who wrote the foreword to the India edition of my *Eco-Imperialism* book) wrote in *Poverty and Progress: Realities and Myths about Global Poverty*:

“The greatest threat to the alleviation of the structural poverty of the Third World is the continuing campaign by western governments, egged on by some climate scientists and green activists, to curb greenhouse emissions, primarily the CO2 from burning fossil fuels.... [I]t is mankind’s use of the mineral energy stored in nature’s gift of fossil fuels ... accompanying the slowly rolling Industrial Revolution, [that] allowed the ascent from structural poverty which had scarred humankind for millennia. To put a limit on the use of fossil fuels without adequate economically viable alternatives is to condemn the Third World to perpetual structural poverty.”

The Cornwall Alliance echoes and expands on these concerns in its *Call to Truth, Prudence and Protection of the Poor*, a 55-page analysis by professor of climatology David Legates and professor of economics Cornelius van Kooten.

Abundant, affordable, reliable energy is indispensable to lifting and keeping people out of poverty, the Alliance points out. Mandatory reductions in CO2 emissions would greatly increase the price of energy, as well as goods and services. Such policies would slow, stop or even reverse the economic growth that enables people to prosper and adapt to all climates. They would harm the poor more than the wealthy,

President Obama says the United States is committed to helping poor nations deal with the effects of “climate disruption.” However, he has also signed an executive order requiring that federal agencies take climate change into account when preparing international development, loan and investment programs. This has meant that U.S. agencies will support wind, solar and biofuel projects – but will not provide loans or other assistance for state-of-the-art gas-fired power plants in Ghana, coal-fired power plants in South Africa, or similar projects in other severely energy-deprived and impoverished nations.

Worldwide, 2.8 billion people still use wood, charcoal, coal and dung in open fires to heat and cook. At least 1.2 billion people still do not have access to electricity and the countless blessings it brings. In India alone, more than 300 million people lack electricity; in Africa more than 550 million. The result is millions of deaths every year from lung and intestinal diseases. The vast majority of these victims are women and children.

But under current White House, IPCC and EU policies, they are not likely to get electricity anytime soon. Mr. Obama justified his policies by telling students in Johannesburg, South Africa, “if everybody has got a car and everybody has got air conditioning and everybody has got a big house, well, the planet will boil over – unless we find new ways of producing energy.”

In other words, in a world where hydrocarbons still provide 82% of all energy, for this White House and IPCC, exaggerated concerns about climate change 50 or 100 years from now trump concerns about safeguarding billions of people from rampant poverty and lethal diseases. This is intolerable.

Wind and solar power will let people in remote areas have light bulbs, cell phone chargers and tiny refrigerators, until they can be connected to an electrical grid. However, such limited, unreliable, expensive electricity cannot support modern economies, factories, shops, schools, hospitals or families.

No wonder China, India and other developing countries are building hundreds of coal-fired generating plants. Their leaders may be happy to participate in wealth transfer schemes, in which they receive (at least promises of) “climate adaptation and mitigation” money from rich countries. But they will not sign any international accord that restricts their fossil fuel use and economic development. They understand all too well the need to end rampant poverty, misery, disease and premature death – even if Mr. Obama, UN Secretary Ban-Ki Moon and Al Gore do not, or do not care.

Put bluntly, “climate-smart” policies for poor countries and poor families are stupid – and immoral.

As American University adjunct professor Caleb Rossiter asked in a June 2014 *Wall Street Journal* article: “Where is the justice when the U.S. discourages World Bank funding for electricity-generation projects in Africa that involve fossil fuels, and when the European Union places a ‘global warming’ tax on cargo flights importing perishable African goods?”

So study these issues. Ponder what the Cornwall Alliance has to say. [Sign the declaration](#). Speak out against energy deprivation, prolonged poverty and needless death. And help protect your children’s futures – and the hopes, aspirations, lives and basic human rights of the world’s poorest families

Paul Driessen is senior policy analyst for the Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow and Congress of Racial Equality, and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green power - Black death*.