

The Salvation Army
International Positional Statement

CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

STATEMENT OF POSITION

The Salvation Army believes people are made in the image of God and have been entrusted with the care of the Earth and everything in it.

The Salvation Army recognises environmental degradation as one of the most pressing issues facing the world today with its effects felt disproportionately by the most vulnerable communities, particularly in terms of health, livelihood, shelter and the opportunity to make choices.

The Salvation Army is concerned about the effects of environmental damage on present and future generations. Sustainable environmental practices are required to meet today's global needs and aspirations without compromising the lives of future generations.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

In the past century, the Earth has suffered unprecedented and devastating levels of degradation resulting in unnatural changes to biodiversity, air and water pollution, ozone depletion and land destruction. The majority scientific opinion predicts increased temperatures leading to more extreme and less predictable weather patterns due to human activity.

Coal, natural gas and oil accounted for 87 per cent of global primary energy consumption in 2012. It is predicted in 2040, liquid fuels, natural gas, and coal will still account for more than three-fourths of total world energy consumption.

Given the finite nature of these resources and a rapidly expanding global population together with the impact of industrial and rural activities, it is clear that this consumption of resources is not sustainable.

Environmental degradation is, however, more than merely an issue of energy efficiency or carbon emissions. It is also impacted by other factors such as population growth, population movements and poverty.

Species extinction of both flora and fauna is increasing because of loss of habitat and climate change. Pollution of air and water, reduced food production and desertification of significant tracts of

land threaten the health, well-being and very survival of millions of people. This issue should concern all people everywhere. The solutions are not simple and will require a concerted effort over a long period of time.

GROUNDS FOR THE POSITION OF THE SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army's response to environmental issues is based on the following principles:

- God is the creator, governor and preserver of all things. The Earth belongs to the Lord and everything in it (Psalm 24:1, Exodus 19:5). As people made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) we have been entrusted with the care of the Earth's resources (Genesis 2:15). God invites us to share responsibility for the care of Creation (Genesis 1:28-31; 2:15) and participate in the work of healing the world (Romans 8:19-22).
- The relationship of God to Creation is one of loving care and concern. Humanity's stewardship of the earth is a reflection of that care, as human beings are made in the image of God. The world was made to praise God and reveal his glory (Psalm 19:1-6); our stewardship of it furthers that end.
- The degradation of the earth is, in part, the result of human activity (Isaiah 24:5-6) and it is therefore our responsibility to work for its healing. The biblical command to humanity to 'subdue' and 'rule' should be interpreted as a requirement to be good stewards rather than understood as justifying abuse of the Earth's resources (Genesis 1:28). The disproportionate effect that climate change and environmental degradation has on the poorest parts of the world creates additional responsibilities to defend the cause of those who are vulnerable by restoring a sense of justice to the global community (Micah 6:8).

PRACTICAL RESPONSES

The Salvation Army seeks to improve its responses to environmental degradation by affirming the following actions:

1. We acknowledge our lack of care for the environment and seek repentance, thereby endeavouring to be more consciously involved in seeking a changed attitude that will lead towards a more responsible use of the environment and its resources.
2. We will encourage changes in Salvationists' attitudes to the environment that will lead toward a more responsible use of the environment and its resources by encouraging reflection on current and past practice.
3. We will enact sound environmental policies and practices within The Salvation Army including comprehensive recycling, environmentally sensitive purchasing policies, environmentally

responsible waste management practices, and the development of innovative ways to reduce the destructive use of natural resources.

4. We will mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation by the training, education and awareness-raising of Salvationists, towards a goal of improving their environmental practices.
5. We will provide practical care and advocacy for those who are impacted by adverse or damaging environmental situations.
6. We will seek opportunities for cooperation and coordination with all governments, people and organisations of goodwill who are working towards a common goal of sustainable lifestyles and environmental care.

References

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The views expressed in this international positional statement constitute the official position of The Salvation Army on the issue addressed, and they may not be modified or adapted in any way without the express written permission of International Headquarters.