

## **Copenhagen Climate Change Summit**

Varied reports are coming from COP15 – some of them positive and hopeful, others filled with disappointment. Because the environment has long been a priority for the Temple of Understanding - we have worked with the UN Environment Program for 15 years – and because climate change presents a religious, ethical and a justice crisis, the Temple sent a delegation to Copenhagen. Lily Schwabe, Mirele Goldsmith and Joan Kirby represented the Temple.

It is time to recognize our desperate need for the next revolution in human history. Human presence in the universe calls us to responsibility for the entire cosmos. This is our GREAT WORK, our Way into the Future, according to Thomas Berry, the great eco-theologian. He calls this the Ecological Age . COP15 offered the possibility of engaging in this great work. That is why we went to Copenhagen.

Every day and evening at Bella Center made it clear that this crisis has a global following. Thousands of youth, scientists, NGOs, UN staff, business persons crowded the Bella Center to make it known that they recognize the imminent danger to our earth. The energy was electric. From this point of view, it was a deeply encouraging experience. Daily comprehensive reports can be found at [www.climateaction.org/ECO](http://www.climateaction.org/ECO) published by the NGO Climate Action Network.

At the plenary sessions however the negotiations among states created another atmosphere. Sadly, politicking, competing and lobbying were prevalent enough to discourage even the most hopeful among us. The smallest and most vulnerable states made it clear that even the Kyoto Protocol, the only legally binding agreement available, was not strong enough to save their peoples and cultures from flooding or parching. China took the lead as the more affluent of the developing nations to oppose any improvements on Kyoto. In the end, when the USA finally entered the discussion, our country had so little to offer that the hoped for fair, ambitious and binding agreement was out of the question. China, Brazil, India and the USA sealed a deal in back rooms that left the small, poor and vulnerable of the world behind. The USA promised to raise money (\$100 billion over ten years) to help the vulnerable states adapt to the changes they would have to make.

One deal was sealed fairly - the REDD – reducing emissions from deforestation. Probably a full third of all the rain forests on the planet have been cut down to make way for the growth of corn and soy beans. The forests are needed to absorb the carbon that our use of fossil fuel is injecting into the atmosphere. Agreements and money were provided to permit the rain forest nations to replant trees to absorb dangerous carbon emissions. That was good news.

A century of the industrial age has enabled and approved human dominance of the earth's life systems resulting in danger to planet earth. We need radical new cultural forms that lead to a transformation of consciousness. We need radical new way of seeing our relationship to the earth. Copenhagen may not have sealed the necessary agreements but there is no doubt that the world is now aware that we must change our lifestyle - the elephant is moving.

The message of responsibility for the Earth resounds among the religious NGOs at the UN. Religions must assume a leadership role to save the planet, our home. We encourage the religious families we represent with their millions of constituents to take this crisis seriously.