

Globethics.net Workgroup on Climate Justice. A testimonial from the moderator Guillermo Kerber



The Workgroup on Climate Justice on the Globethics.net Website was established in May 2009 to get an ethical approach to climate change and justice issues which are increasingly being related at various levels. The purpose was to collect documents, share studies and reflections and prepare a short report.

At the beginning we established a maximum of 20 participants, to have a workable number. When we discussed with Globethics.net colleagues we wondered whether we would reach this number. The quantity of interested Globethics.net members went far beyond our expectations. This created the problem of selecting the participants. We tried to keep different balances: geographical regions, gender, religious/secular backgrounds. We ended up with a group where we have representatives from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe, 60% men and 40% women, Christian, Muslim and secular members. Contributions from the members of the group showed that the balances were much more than a "politically correct" move. The richness and variety of the composition was reflected in the more than 20 documents shared by the members. Different styles, approaches, concerns and challenges showed the relevance of the workgroup.

At the same time this richness and variety raised up some of the limitations of the group. It was clear since the beginning, that most of the participants would have very little time to work for the outcomes of the group. We had very good contributions, as expressed earlier, but it was extremely difficult to find volunteers to write the final report.

Another limitation is related to Globethics.net vehicle, namely, the use of internet. At different times during these months many members of the group experienced difficulties in participating actively in the discussions in the web. This was due to several reasons: at the beginning, Globethics.net just changed its website, but the main reason was, that members from Africa, mainly, reported slow connections that prevented them to work with the website. Documents had to be sent by e-mail so they could get them.

A third aspect, not exclusively related to this Workgroup, but worth mentioning it, is that the choice of English as working language left aside many potential good contributors who don't have English as way of communication. I'm thinking of my colleagues from Latin America but I am sure this is the case also for other languages. I therefore fully support the effort of Globethics.net which offers its website already in six languages (English, Spanish, French, German, Chinese and Indonesian)

Last but not least, the support provided by Globethics.net staff was extremely helpful at any time. Staff offered not only Web knowledge, which would have been expected, but most valuable advices regarding contents and methodology as well. Despite the many responsibilities they have, the experience of the Workgroup showed a committed and knowledgeable staff who make the work easier to the moderator.

While this is still a Workgroup in progress and the final outcome in form of an international statement on Climate Justice should be ready soon for the Copenhagen Climate Conference, this has been for me a worthwhile experience which has enhanced my professional work on the topic.

Dr. Guillermo Kerber, World Council of Churches, (November 2009)