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Evangelical, Scientific Leaders Launch Effort to Protect Earth

*Unprecedented collaboration aims to instill sense of urgency on elected officials,
advance sound environmental policies*

WASHINGTON, DC - In a first-of-its-kind collaboration, evangelical and scientific leaders announced today a collaborative effort to protect the environment. Speaking at a news conference in Washington, DC, a dozen leaders of the effort shared concerns about human-caused threats to the creation - including climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, species extinction, the spread of human infectious diseases, and other dangers to the well-being of societies.

The coalition released an "Urgent Call to Action" statement signed by 28 evangelical and scientific leaders. The statement - sent to President George W. Bush, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, bipartisan congressional leaders, and national evangelical and scientific organizations - urges "fundamental change in values, lifestyles, and public policies required to address these worsening problems before it is too late. Business as usual cannot continue yet one more day." The group pledged to "work together toward a responsible care for creation and call with one voice" to the religious, scientific, business, political and educational arenas to join them in this historic initiative.

"There is no such thing as a Republican or Democrat, a liberal or conservative, a religious or secular environment. We all breathe the same air and drink the same water. Scientists and evangelicals share a deep moral commitment to preserve this precious gift we have all been given," said Dr. Eric Chivian, Nobel laureate and Director of the Harvard Medical School Center for Health and the Global Environment.

"Great scientists are people of imagination. So are people of great faith. We dare to imagine a world in which science and religion cooperate, minimizing our differences about how Creation got started, to work together to reverse its degradation. We will not allow it to be progressively destroyed by human folly," added Rev. Richard Cizik, Vice President for Government Affairs of the National Association of Evangelicals.

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Stressing that their effort is just beginning, coalition members spoke about some of the immediate next steps they will be taking, including holding meetings with Congressional leaders from both parties to inform them of this unprecedented effort and encourage their attention to environmental issues. They also plan to hold a Summit on the Creation and will develop outreach tools, such as an environmental bible and environmental curricula.

“If current deterioration of the environment by human activity continues unabated, best estimates are that half of Earth's surviving species of plants and animals will be extinguished or critically endangered by the end of the century. The price for future generations will be paid in economic opportunity, environmental security, and spiritual fulfillment. The saving of the living environment is therefore an issue appropriately addressed jointly by science and religion,” said Pulitzer-award winning author Dr. Edward O. Wilson.

One of the imperatives of the group will be to advance the dialogue and influence policy in regards to global warming. “In order to avoid clear and substantial dangers...it will be necessary to substantially reduce CO₂ emissions during the next few decades, and perhaps by 80 percent or more before the end of the century, ” said Dr. James Hansen, the leading climate change scientist in the United States.

The coalition vowed to expand their collaboration and encourage action from all sectors of society. “We are glad to be partnering with our friends in the scientific community. They have the facts we need to present to our congregations; we have the numbers of activists that will work through churches, government, and the business community to make a significant impact,” said Dr. Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor of the mega Northland Church in Orlando, Florida.

The unique collaboration, 28-members strong and growing, was spearheaded by leaders from the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and the National Association of Evangelicals. During a retreat held last November 30 to December 2nd in Thomasville, Georgia, the group agreed that science proves that the natural world is imperiled by human behaviors and policies, particularly by the unsustainable burning of fossil fuels and degradation of living systems. They decided to embark on a continuing collaboration and authored the “Urgent Call to Action” statement.

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