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GLOBAL WARMING MAINLY NATURAL AND NOT CATASTROPHIC, SAYS NEW STUDY FROM INTERFAITH STEWARDSHIP ALLIANCE

ISA STUDY WAS RELEASED LAST WEEK IN WASHINGTON, DC

Washington, D.C.; August 2, 2006 -- While global warming is real, catastrophic, human-induced global warming isn't, and mandatory reductions in fossil fuel use to fight it are unwise, say the authors of "A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming" (<http://www.interfaithstewardship.org/pages/home.php>), released publicly in Washington, D.C., by the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA) July 25.

The paper is a point-by-point refutation of "Climate Change: A Call to Action," issued in February by the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) (<http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement>). Both papers claim support by evangelical leaders, and they rest on the same world view, theology, ethics, and motivation. But the similarities stop there. While the ECI's "Call to Action" asserts that increased atmospheric carbon dioxide because of burning coal, oil, and natural gas causes most of the current warming, the ISA's "Call to Truth" argues that it is probably a minority cause, following changes in energy output from the sun and other natural causes. While the ECI says current global warming is unprecedented, already causing extensive harm, and will become catastrophic, the ISA says it is within the bounds of natural variability, has both harmful and beneficial effects, and is unlikely to become catastrophic. And while the ECI calls for mandatory carbon emissions reductions to reduce future warming, the ISA argues that that policy will harm the world's poor and calls instead for economic development in poor countries to enable them to adapt to whatever climate the future holds.

The contrasts continue. The ECI's "Call to Action" is a brief (about 1,800 words), simple paper that states only broad conclusions, offering little evidence. While the ISA's "Call to Truth" is accompanied by a 1,000-word "Open Letter" that summarizes the conclusions, the paper itself is much longer (about 12,600 words) and includes extensive data, theoretical explanation, and citation of authoritative scientific studies. Because it lacks data, explanation, and sources, the ECI's "Call to Action" implicitly asks readers simply to trust its authors—but it doesn't name any.

The ISA's "Call to Truth" lists four authors, each with special qualifications:

- Roy W. Spencer, Ph.D. (Climatology), principal research scientist, University of Alabama, Huntsville, former senior scientist for climate studies, Marshall Space Flight Center, NASA;
- Ross McKittrick, Ph.D. (environmental economics), associate professor and director of graduate studies, University of Guelph, author of the Donner Prize-winning *Taken By Storm: The Troubled Science, Policy and Politics of Global Warming* (Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2002), and an expert reviewer for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (Working Group 1);
- Paul K. Driessen, Esq., environmental ethicist, senior policy advisor on energy and environmental issues for the Congress of Racial Equality, and author of *Eco-Imperialism: Green Power, Black Death* (Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press, 2003); and
- E. Calvin Beisner, Ph.D. (history/history of political thought), associate professor of social ethics at Knox Theological Seminary, co-founder of the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, coauthor of the Cornwall

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Declaration on Environmental Stewardship, and author of *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry Into the Environmental Debate* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans/Acton Institute, 1997) and two other books on environmental science and ethics.

The ECI's "Call to Action" was endorsed initially by 86 evangelical leaders—mostly Christian college presidents, mega-church pastors, and mission leaders. Since February it has lost one endorsement but added about ten, none with apparent expertise in climate science, environmental economics, or the economics of climate change adaptation. The ISA's "Call to Truth" is endorsed by 113 evangelical and 19 non-evangelical leaders. Among the evangelical endorsers are 19 environmental scientists, including four climatologists or meteorologists; 13 economists, including four environmental economists; 19 Christian education leaders, including nine chancellors, provosts, or deans of Christian colleges or seminaries; 21 pastors; and 29 theologians. Among its 19 non-evangelical endorsers are 13 environmental scientists, including eight climatologists, meteorologists, and other climate scientists, plus three environmental economists. One evangelical leader so far has revoked his endorsement of the ECI's "Call to Action" and endorsed the ISA's "Call to Truth" instead—Bishop Wellington Boone, founder and chief overseer of the Fellowship of International Churches.

The ECI's "Call to Action" rests on four assumptions:

- Human emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as we burn fuels for energy are the main cause of global warming.
- Global warming is not only real but is almost certainly going to be catastrophic in its consequences for humanity—especially the poor.
- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions would so curtail global warming as to significantly reduce its anticipated harmful effects.
- Mandatory carbon dioxide emissions reductions would achieve that end with overall effects that would be more beneficial than harmful to humanity and other species.

In contrast, the ISA's "Call to Truth" presents empirical evidence and authoritative sources arguing that:

- Foreseeable global warming will have moderate and mixed (not only harmful but also helpful), not catastrophic, consequences for humanity—including the poor—and other species.
- Natural causes may account for a large part, perhaps the majority, of the global warming in both the last thirty and the last one hundred fifty years, which together constitute an episode in the natural rising and falling cycles of global average temperature. Human emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are probably a minor and possibly an insignificant contributor to its causes.
- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions would have at most an insignificant impact on the quantity and duration of global warming and would not significantly reduce alleged harmful effects.
- Government-mandated carbon dioxide emissions reductions not only would not significantly curtail global warming or reduce its harmful effects but also would cause greater harm than good to humanity—especially the poor—while offering virtually no benefit to other species.
- The most prudent response is not to try to prevent or reduce whatever slight warming might occur. It is instead to prepare to adapt by fostering means that will effectively protect humanity—especially the poor—not only from whatever harms might be anticipated from global warming but also from harms that might be fostered by other types of catastrophes, natural or manmade.

ISA's "Call to Truth" includes evidence refuting ECI's claims that human-induced global warming will cause catastrophic sea level rise; more frequent heat waves, droughts, and extreme weather events such as floods; increased tropical diseases; more intense hurricanes; and reduction in agricultural output. Indeed, it cites conclusive studies showing that rising carbon dioxide enhances plant growth and contributes to increased crop yields, making food more abundant and less expensive, thus helping the world's poor. It

also both refutes the claim of scientific consensus of catastrophic human-induced global warming and argues that such consensus, even if it existed, would not justify failure to test the evidence and arguments in favor of it—and that such testing, in this case, finds the hypothesis unproved.

Two leading climatologists, both expert reviewers for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, wrote strong commendations of ISA’s “Call to Truth” when they endorsed it. MIT’s Richard Lindzen wrote, “You and your colleagues have put together one of the best and most cogent statements on this issue that I have seen thus far.”

David Legates, associate professor of climatology and director of the Center for Climatic Research at the University of Delaware and Delaware State Climatologist, wrote: “Thank you . . . for allowing me to view . . . *A Call to Truth, Prudence, and Protection of the Poor: An Evangelical Response to Global Warming*. As both a Christian and a scientist, I find the response to be well-written with points well-taken; with Christian brotherly love but noting areas of decided disagreement. I must confess that I have been quite troubled ever since the ECI was unveiled. The climate change debate has become for me very troubling at times but my Christian faith has allowed me to separate the “issues of this world” from those which are far more important. I became extremely discouraged when that debate crossed that line. I am glad to see that you (plural) have put together a well-written essay that lovingly outlays our concerns with the ECI initiative. I trust that the debate in this arena is much more civil—if it is conducted with Christ at the center, it can only remain so. Therefore, as both a Christian and a scientist, I wish to strongly endorse your response to the ECI initiative.”