



Advocacy Update

Sent October 26, 2011

United Nations Climate Change Conference

The United Nations is holding a climate change conference, referred to as COP 17, in Durban, South Africa, from November 27, to December 9, 2011. The conference will bring together representatives of the world's governments, international organizations and civil society. The discussions will seek to advance the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC, adopted in 1992, and the international plans and agreements reached since 1994 when the UNFCCC entered into force.

Paddy Meskin, former member of WRJ's board and currently president of the South African Union of Temple Sisterhoods (SAUTS), lives in Durban and has been organizing faith communities in support of the conference. In a recent letter to us, Paddy wrote, "The climate change conference is so important, because it actually touches every single person's life. Especially with regard to water, which is becoming the biggest challenge for the world. We in South Africa, have water only for fourteen years, say the optimists. The realists tell us we have ten years! Then what! At a meeting I attended last year, the message from the experts was that all the next wars will be fought over water!"

One of the ways that the SAUTS sisterhoods are supporting the climate change conference is through a campaign for the planting of trees to reduce carbon emissions. SAUTS has taken this up as a major campaign, "ONE MILLION TREES BEFORE COP 17!," and is urging members of the Jewish Community to plant trees by their own homes, in nearby marginalized communities that have no trees, and in Israel.

Clearly this is not the season for North Americans to plant trees in their own communities. Accordingly, Paddy suggests that North American sisterhoods plant trees to replace those lost in the fires on Carmel in Israel. Your sisterhood can do so through the Jewish National Fund's (JNF) "Operation Carmel Renewal: From Black to Green" an ongoing effort to help in the forests' recovery and in replacing firefighting equipment and supplies that were depleted during the fire. To make a donation, go to the Operation Carmel Renewal website.

WRJ South African Leader Wins Prestigious Award

On Sunday, October 9, 2011, Paddy Meskin was awarded, together with her coordinator in Religions for Peace, an interfaith program of which she is the South African President, the prestigious Mahatma Gandhi Satyagraha Peace Award. They received the award because of the work they have done over the past twenty years in bringing the interfaith community together and promoting understanding and harmony in their country.

Paddy says it was at an NFTS (now WRJ) assembly in 1977 where she first learned the value of outreach, interfaith communication, and dialogue.

Help SAUTS support the climate change conference by planting trees through Operation Carmel Renewal.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home