

Congratulatory message for the Asian Civil-society Conference on Climate change

Now is the time for the religious community to take actions
to halt climate change

Namgung Seong, head of *Won* Buddhism

Members of Asian civil society, and activists of Korean organizing committee, you have been playing active roles in dealing with damage caused by climate change, from which many lives have suffered. Today, as I am participating in this conference with you, I feel both reassured and obliged, as a man of religion.

In the process of industrialization, human beings have pursued their own convenience out of their selfishness with what they called science and civilization, which led to the destruction of the environment. The damage from the destruction is backfiring on human society.

Yellow dust facing us every spring is the result of indiscriminate logging. Now, this unselective destruction is destroying the forests, accelerating desertification with higher temperature, and even preventing human beings from breathing clear air.

The 5th assessment report published by IPCC(Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) recently pointed out that human activities have mainly caused climate change. In addition, IPCC stated that more than half of the influences, which have resulted from climate change for the past six decades, were caused by human activities, raising the possibility that human activity is the main cause of climate change, to 95%. All of us here, including myself, seem to have no choice but to accept the IPCC report.

South Korea is the seventh largest producer of green house gases, which have direct influences on climate change, and tops other 34 OECD member states in the rate of increase in emissions of those gases.

It is reported that ultra-fine particles from the coal-fired plants make approximately 260,000

people in China lead to early death annually, around 80,000 in India, about 10,000 in America, and some 20,000 in Europe. It is said that the number is about 1,600 in South Korea. I am worried that my imagination of wearing a mask in my daily lives might become reality.

100 years ago, Ven. Sotaesan, the founder of *Won* Buddhism, said, "The easiest way to understand how one is indebted to heaven and earth is to think whether one can preserve one's existence and live without heaven and earth. Then, even an imbecile will admit that one cannot live without heaven and earth. What could be a greater beneficence than that without which one cannot exist?" He also stressed that no creature is meaningless because every life in this world is connected with human beings.

Ven. Sotaesan taught us 'as material power is unfolding, let us unfold our spiritual power accordingly.' *Won* Buddhism celebrates its centenary this year, and following his teaching, will make more efforts to establish the renewable energy system. This system will switch our society of using the energy generated by thermoelectric power plants or nuclear power plants which use fossil fuel or uranium, to the society of using natural energy such as solar, wind, geothermal heat and so on. It is known that using fossil fuel has the biggest effect on climate change. Now, *Won* Buddhism plans to construct 100 sunshine plants in 100 temples, and to build self-sufficient temples and communities using zero fossil fuel. I hope a concrete code of conduct will be drawn up in this conference, which starts today with an aim to cope with climate change. I also hope this conference will be held on a regular basis, instead of being a onetime event. I expect a regular meeting will be a significant platform in which ideas and policies to halt climate change can be created and exemplary practices can be shared. I deeply appreciate the Korean organizing committee composed of 12 organizations including Korean NGOs for international development assistance and environmental groups based on religious beliefs for its efforts to arrange this conference successfully. Also, I express my sense of solidarity to civil-society leaders from 26 countries. Thank you.