

Reform Movement Commends International Climate Agreement

Contact: Allison Porton or Rachel Landman
202.387.2800 | news@rac.org

Washington, D.C., December 14, 2015 – In response to the agreement reached at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, Director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, issued the following statement:

The agreement announced Saturday at the conclusion of the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris marks a historic step in the global fight against climate change. We commend the commitment of leaders from around the world to create the first international, legally binding climate agreement that, if implemented, will have the effect of arresting the progression of climate change and mitigating its effects, particularly on the most vulnerable.

Our Jewish tradition teaches us to be responsible stewards of the earth, commanded to “till and to tend” (Genesis 2:15) and that “if there is a needy person among you...you must open your hand and lend whatever is sufficient” (Deuteronomy 15). Policies that both reduce our global carbon emissions, and provide protection and support for countries and individuals that face the undue burden of climate change honor both of these commandments.

We especially commend President Obama’s leadership during the conference and the United States’ announcement that it will double its adaptation financing to \$800 million. This reflects an understanding of our significant contribution to emissions responsible for climate change, and our leadership in fixing it. Canada’s active participation in this conference exhibited an important shift in climate change policy necessary to take bold action. We applaud Prime Minister Trudeau’s statement that his new government will strongly invest in clean technology and move toward a climate resilient economy. We look forward to seeing that policy enacted.

Furthermore, the inclusion of greater strategies to limit temperature rise to under 2 degrees Celsius – and even under 1.5 degrees Celsius if possible – is a central measure to ensure the survival of the most at-risk nations. Taking a bold step to reach emissions neutrality by the second half of the century is the type of action necessary to change the course of climate change, and ensure a sustainable planet for future generations.

While we are encouraged by the commitments of the parties to support developing nations’ efforts to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, we know there is even more work to be done. With new global emissions targets, we must now work together as a global community to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, hold all nations accountable to their targets and continue to increase our efforts to reach our global goals. Furthermore, we must continue to ensure that developing and vulnerable countries receive financial support for their adaptation and mitigation strategies so they too can move toward cleaner energy and reduce emissions.

This international agreement provides great hope for the future of climate justice, but only if the United States, Canada, and all parties act on their commitments. We look forward to a future where that is a reality and where the leadership shown in Paris to halt the climate change that threatens us all continues to be a reality as well.

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The **Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism** is the Washington office of the **Union for Reform Judaism**, whose more than **900 congregations** across North America encompass **1.5 million Reform Jews**, and the **Central Conference of American Rabbis**, whose membership includes more than **2,000 Reform rabbis**. Visit www.rac.org for more.