

*welcome speech for the State Secretary responsible for environment*

## **Conference on the environmental role of churches**

*25<sup>th</sup> November 2015, Budapest, Ministry of Agriculture*

Dear Audience, dear Excellences,

Dear Priests, Professors, Academicians, Researchers, Benedictines, Calvinists, Jews, Krishna followers, Buddhists – dear All!



It is our true joy to welcome all of you here. It is a true joy that you represent a real diversity of cultures, values, approaches. If I look around in this auditorium I see richness number of us and also richness in diversity. It confirms that society is receptive for the issue of environmental roles of churches – even in these politically troubled times.

We witness politically troubled times. Next week the climate peak will begin in Paris, and that can be a notable milestone in the history of humankind, as now the future of our planet can be at stake. Father Pope Francis in his Encyclical Letter titled LAUDATO published last summer calls climate change as general societal challenge.

Environment protection is based on the nature sciences. The fact that creation protection became part of our common talk is the fruitage of the Encyclical Letter LAUDATO SI’.

I agree with the Encyclical Letter: rising environmental awareness is not only our personal interest but also a moral order. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of September I have been one of the guests of Father Pope Francis, and had the honour of listening to his speech for the ministers responsible for environment in the EU. The pope emphasized the various roles of various stakeholders. As he worded: for discussing and tackling our problem *“everyone’s talents and involvement are needed”*.

Everyone is needed for the preservation of biodiversity. Why is that so important? A tangible answer can be that if we produced only one kind of potato, the spread of diseases

could make immense devastation, disprofit, and even starvation. This had happened in Ireland in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a certain disease made astonishing damages in potato yields, because then they had only one kind of potato. In that time one from eight Irish died. We can approach this problem using natural science or economy. But after them, there is also a moral approach, saying for example that diversity is nice.

When we have a garden we usually plant different kinds of flowers. One may prefer dryer and sunny weather while other will like rain and shadow. If we plant different kinds, we always will have nice flower in the garden. Last year tulip and portulacva was extraordinary, while this year forgetme-not and sweet-william blossomed outstandingly.

Members of society are similarly diverse. And if we see them together, we can always find some who are outstanding. And that is why it is our true joy to welcome you here in such a number and in such diversity.

Diversity of organizations and churches: we have catholic priest on the Encyclical Letter of Father Pope Francis; a professor from Pécs University on climate, resources and economy; a member from Hungarian Science Academy on sustainable development; we have a presentation on the roles of churches in rural development; we have introduction of the book "Eight churches for the future"; we have guidance into event branding of Abbey of Pannonhalma, a Calvinist initiative for connecting customers and ecological farmers; we have kosher farm manager, organizer of Krishna Valley – ecovillage; we have Buddhism; and an introduction to the Ecological Congregation Movement.

For the conference and for further cooperation I wish for the blessing of our Creator!