

8190:6/91

**AMERICAN BAPTIST
RESOLUTION ON THE CERES PRINCIPLES
(formerly Valdez Principles)**

On September 7, 1989, the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) announced the Valdez Principles. CERES is a broad coalition of environmental organizations, consumer groups, labor unions and institutional investors, including National Ministries and other religious groups that are members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.

Named after the tragic oil spill in Alaska in March 1989, the Valdez Principles presented an environmental ethic for corporations. In April 1992, the Principles were amended through corporate negotiation and are now known as the Ceres Principles. The Principles extend beyond corporate and industry-wide codes of conduct. Unlike such codes the Principles provide a means of public accountability for corporate environmental activity. They furnish a larger framework for local groups to monitor particular corporate environmental activity. They apply across industry and national boundaries. They offer investors a means of making independent assessments of good environmental investments through standardized environmental reports.

Churches have long been leaders in efforts to protect God's creation from destruction. As early as 1971 a Church Panel on Copper Mining convened in Puerto Rico to address the environmental impacts of a proposed mine. The panel included an American Baptist representative. Later churches as investors raised issues like those arising from Love Canal and the use of Agent Orange as a defoliant in Vietnam. Church-related community groups have acted on issues like the location of hazardous waste landfills and the pollution of air and water.

Our Biblical heritage supports concerns about caring for the whole of creation in a framework of justice. We affirm God as creator and the responsibility of humanity to care for that creation. Our neighbors are not only other humans but the whole of creation. This relationship between creator, creature and creation is one of the most basic. It is the basis for the shalom or peace which is the foundation for justice in the Old Testament. When that relationship is broken, the earth and all its inhabitants

The earth lies polluted under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few are left. Isaiah 24:5-6

Disruption of the peaceable relationship between creature and creation is sin. Actions of individuals and corporations contribute to that disruption. The church as the community of God's stewards has a vocation to name that disruption, to stand beside those whose lives are threatened, and to work to change practices causing the disturbance. The alliance of churches with environmentalists and other groups behind the Ceres Principles is a natural one to address corporate environmental responsibility. Scientific technology developed and used in the economic context of national and multinational corporations has produced institutions of tremendous power. These institutions drive our consumption with little regard for national or natural limits. They have become modern idolmakers with the capability of destroying the very resources which they need to exist.

Believing that our power is derived from our connection to the Creator and creation, we bear a particular responsibility to oversee the activities of these corporations within responsible ethical guidelines.

We therefore affirm our support and active involvement with the Ceres Principles.

The Ceres Principles Introduction

By adopting these Principles, we publicly affirm our belief that corporations have a responsibility for the environment, and must conduct all aspects of business as responsible stewards of the environment by operating in a manner that protects the Earth. We believe that corporations must not compromise the ability of future generations to sustain themselves.

We will update our practices constantly in light of advances in technology and new understanding in health and environmental science. In collaboration with CERES, we will promote a dynamic process to ensure that the Principles are interpreted in a way that accommodates changing technologies and environmental realities. We intend to make consistent measurable progress in implementing these Principles and to apply them to all aspects of our operations throughout the world.

1. Protection of the Biosphere: We will reduce and make continual progress eliminating the release of any substance that may cause environmental damage to the air, water, or the earth or its inhabitants. We will safeguard all habitats affected by our operations and will protect open spaces and wilderness, while preserving our biodiversity.

2. Sustainable Use of Natural Resources: We will make sustainable use of renewable natural resources, such as water, soils and forests. We will conserve nonrenewable natural resources through efficient use and careful planning.

3. Reduction and Disposal of Wastes: We will reduce and where possible eliminate waste through source reduction and recycling. All waste will be handled and disposed of through safe and responsible methods.

4. Energy Conservation: We will conserve energy and improve the energy efficiency of our internal operations and of the goods and services we sell. We will make every effort to use environmentally safe and sustainable energy sources.

5. Risk Reduction: We will strive to minimize the environmental, health and safety risks to our employees and the communities in which we operate through safe technologies, facilities and operating procedures, and by being prepared for emergencies.

6. Safe Products and Services: We will reduce and where possible, eliminate the use, manufacture or sale of products and services that cause environmental damage or health or safety hazards. We will inform our customers of the environmental impacts of our products or services and try to correct unsafe use.

7. Environmental Restoration: We will promptly and responsibly correct conditions we have caused that endanger health, safety or the environment. To the extent feasible, we will redress injuries we have caused to persons or damage we have caused to the environment and will restore the environment.

8. Informing the Public: We will inform in a timely manner everyone who may be affected by conditions caused by our company that might endanger health, safety or the environment. We will regularly seek advice and counsel through dialogue with persons in communities near our facilities. We will not take any action against employees for reporting dangerous incidents or conditions to management or to appropriate authorities.

9. Management Commitment: We will implement these Principles and sustain a process that ensures that the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer are fully informed about pertinent environmental issues and are fully responsible for environmental policy. In selecting our Board of Directors, we will consider demonstrated environmental commitment as a factor.

10. Audits and Reports: We will conduct an annual self-evaluation of our progress in

implementing these Principles. We will support the timely creation of generally accepted environmental audit procedures. We will annually complete the CERES Reports, which will be made available to the public.

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DISCLAIMER

These Principles establish an environmental ethic with criteria by which investors and others can assess the environmental performance of companies. Companies that sign these Principles pledge to voluntarily go beyond the requirements of the law. The terms may and might in Principles One and Eight are not meant to encompass every imaginable consequence, no matter how remote. Rather, the Principles obligate endorsees to behave as prudent persons who are not governed by conflicting interests and who possess a strong commitment to environmental excellence and to human health and safety. These Principles are not extended to create new legal liabilities, expand existing rights or obligations, waive legal defenses, or otherwise affect the legal position of any signatory company, and are not intended to be used against a signatory in any legal proceeding for any purpose.

*Adopted by the General Board of the American Baptist Churches - November 1991
154 For, 2 Against, 8 Abstentions
Revised by the Executive Committee of the General Board - March 1993
Modified by the General Board Executive Committee - March 1997
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Policy Base

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Ecology - June 1989

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Energy - June 1977

American Baptist Churches Policy Statement on Human Rights - December 1976

4. The right to a secure and healthy environment, clean air, pure water, and an earth that can nurture and support present and future generations.

American Baptist Churches Resolution on the Disposal of Hazardous and Radioactive Waste - December 1982

American Baptist Churches Resolution on Environmental Concerns - March 1983