

Freak hailstorm in tropical Kenya 'a foretaste' of climate change, says ecologist and theologian

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Unusual weather conditions that led to a blanket of hail resembling snow falling on the Nyahururu area in central Kenya are the result of the plunder and pollution of the planet, says a Kenyan theologian and ecologist.

“As a consequence of human-induced rapid climate change there will be extreme weather and ecological conditions,” Professor Jesse Mugambi told Ecumenical News International on Sept. 4. “This happened in Nyahururu, and it has also happened elsewhere, in southern Africa, some parts of Asia and also in some parts of the Americas.”

The hailstorm on Sept. 2 covered 40 hectares of land and was at least 10 centimetres (4 inches) deep, media reported. In three villages in Nyahururu, people are continuing to marvel at the snow-like substance on their land, with schools suspending classes to visit the areas.

Still, the hail fell at the end of a long cold season, and resulted in the destruction of maize, beans, pea and vegetable crops.

As the ice pellets fell, African leaders and those concerned about climate change were meeting in Dakar, Senegal to discuss how the continent can benefit from carbon trading, a policy that seeks to stabilize and gradually reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Mugambi, who is a professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of Nairobi, said some people had chosen to “work against nature” when they should be working with nature. “The more we plunder and pollute, the more ‘developed’ we consider ourselves to be,” said Mr. Mugambi, who is also a member of World Council of Churches’ working group on climate change. “We are challenged by the Gospel to make it possible for the natural processes to replenish and renew our ecological home,” he added.

Churches leaders and theologians have been calling for reduction of greenhouse gases, which are said to accelerate global warming. They also want to see adaptation measures, especially for the poor in Africa, where the consequences of climate change are expected to be more severe.

“It is very late to begin, but it is not too late,” said Mr. Mugambi. “We must take responsibility for the damage we have cost to the ecology of this planet.”