

FAITH FOR EARTH



Faith for Earth Updates July 20, 2018



Dear Friends;

Greetings of peace, love and prosperity.

As we have now almost completed our data base of more than 450 faith-based organizations working on environmental issues, or have environment as one of their priority areas, I wanted to reach out to you before most of the people start their summer holidays.

In this first message, I would like to share with you the UN Environment Strategy on engaging with Faith-based organizations launching the Faith For Earth Initiative. The strategy was developed late last year and was discussed with 40 representatives of 10 faiths in December 2017 in Nairobi. The strategy is intended to be implemented with and through distinguished partners from around the world.

In the near future, I will be sharing with you a survey to solicit your input and suggestions on the strategy, its implementation and how can we work together to maximize our collective efforts in achieving our common goals in protecting our only planet and caring for the creation. For now, I kindly invite you to read the strategy and share with me your valuable comments.

As you are aware, UN Environment is governed by its [UN Environment Assembly](#) ([the Environment Parliament of the World](#)) which is scheduled to meet in its fourth session during the period **11-15 March 2019**, after 27 Governing council meetings before it became a universal membership. The main theme for the upcoming session is **"Innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production"**. A theme that I personally believe very much corresponds to the innovative approach that Faith-Based organizations are taking to influence, inspire and empower faith leaders and the general public.

[Major groups and Stakeholders](#) are genuine partners in charting the way for UN Environment and contributing to its [decisions and resolutions](#), as well as its [Medium Term Strategy](#) and [programme of work](#). When implementing its Programme of Work, UN Environment relies on implementing and executing

partners from Major Groups and Stakeholders, relying on their expertise, capacity building and outreach abilities and regional, national and local presence. Major groups and stakeholders are accredited to UN Environment through a process of accreditation. Currently, we have 10 Faith-based organizations accredited to the UN Environment Assembly. I invite you all to look at the [guidelines for accreditation](#) and encourage you to apply. My dream is to make the next UN Environment Assembly spiritually blessed and truly inspired by the presence of many Faith-based organizations.

Finally, I am also delighted to share with you the latest [UN Environment Foresight series issue on Faith For Earth](#). A unique hashtag ([#Faith4Earth](#)) has been created to share and archive news, activities and knowledge on our collective work of Faith-based organizations on protecting our planet, which I encourage you to use when communicating on social media.

My warmest wishes to you all
Iyad

PS: We respect your right to manage who sends emails to you, therefore, the recipients of this email have been added as Bcc. Kindly add my email address to trusted email addresses to avoid going to your spam folders.

[#Faith4Earth](#)

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Understanding the key role that faith-based organizations play at the global, regional and local levels, UN Environment supports the UN task force on Religion and Development. UN Environment is taking lead in establishing an innovative strategy to engage and partner with faith-based organizations to deliver on Agenda 2030. The strategy builds on the 5 principles (People living on a healthy Planet, enjoying Prosperity and Partnerships in Peaceful societies), with three overarching goals: 1) Leadership for policy impact; 2) Financing to support SDGs; and 3) Knowledgebased decision support system. The three goals will largely depend on mobilizing local communities; coordinating communications and advocacy; fostering south-south cooperation; engaging in faith Environment thematic conversations and empowering UN Environment corporate engagement.

UN Environment Strategy

Faith For Earth

January 2018

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Executive Summary

The global Agenda 2030 can only be achieved by engaging and empowering stakeholders, mobilizing partnerships and engaging untapped innovative approaches. While it is widely acknowledged that the role of civil society and nongovernment organizations is crucial, the full spectrum of such organizations has not been adequately addressed including those organizations based on faith, values, culture and indigenous knowledge. Building on the cultural diversity is significant and fulfills the fourth dimension of sustainable development as called for in Rio Summits. Traditional V W D N H K R G O General Strategies have been effective to a limited scale requiring new creative, inspiring and innovative acting like-minded networks to support the implementation of the global Agenda at all levels.

Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) have been recognized by the UN system as key and important players in sustainable development. Citizens see such organizations as being trustworthy and highly networked with dynamism that enables them to operate and achieve on the ground results where and when needed. Spiritual values for more than 80% of the people living on earth have been driving individual behaviors. In many countries, spiritual beliefs and religion are main drivers for cultural values, social inclusion, political engagement, and economic prosperity. Utilizing the dynamics of these beliefs at the local level and the role of faith actors is crucial for sustainable development. Conserving the environment has not been absent from the focus of faith-based organizations. In fact, our research revealed that more than 90 environmental faith-based organizations have been working at the global, regional and local level addressing climate change, energy conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and reforestation, among others.

For UN Environment, the integrated approach should facilitate the integration of religious and cultural values to ensure inclusive green and transformative development through adopting lifestyles that are informed by faith-based values and behaviors to achieve sustainable consumption and production. The integrated approach coupled with cultural and religious values can promote innovative based solutions, respect for traditional and indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity, exercise environmental stewardship and duty of care. This coupling of environmental sustainability and duty of care can be the corner stone for a common vision that enhances the role of religion and culture in achieving sustainability. For this purpose, UN Environment is launching a global initiative to strategically engage with faith-based organizations as partners, at all levels, toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling Agenda 2030. To be able to do so, the organization will engage faith-based organizations to realize an impact on local communities' sustainable livelihoods based on common spiritual values. The Strategy focuses on mobilizing faith-based investments in supporting SDG implementation while greening their assets and providing the needed knowledge for effective messages of faith leaders to decision makers and the general public. The three overarching goals of the strategy relate to 1) Leadership for policy impact; 2) Green Faith-Based Financing to achieve SDGs; and 3) Knowledge-based decision support system. The three goals will largely depend on mobilizing local communities communications and advocacy; south-south cooperation; faith-based Environment thematic conventions and empowering UN Environment corporate engagement.

Mission

³ 7 Encourage Empower and Engage with Faith-Based Organizations as partners at all levels toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals fulfilling Agenda 2030

Vision

³A world where everything is in balance'

Values: CREATION

Communicate: Communicate effectively to engage all stakeholders.

Respect: Respect all spiritual and religious beliefs.

Empower: Empower and engage with all stakeholders.

Act: Act in ways that reflect individual and communal beliefs.

Transform: Transform S H R S O H V the Enough Dnrls Pritual values.

Inspire: Inspire innovative approaches to achieve the 2030 Agenda

Organize: Organize knowledge and other resources for efficient timely results.

Network: Network with the UN system and likeminded organizations.

Introduction and Background

The Agenda 2030 five¹ principles of People, Planet, Prosperity, PeacePartnerships are envisioned as an overarching strategy to mobilize global action towards sustainable development. It is widely acknowledged that partnerships are important for the implementation of the Agenda especially by engaging and empowering all stakeholders. While it is a global Agenda it also acknowledges and respects the diversity of capacities policies and priorities, bringing together governments (at all levels) as partners with the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other. Partnerships are intended to mobilize creative approaches, innovations, create innovative financing cultivate existing science along with indigenous knowledge and engage like-minded networks to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

Faith-Based Organizations (FBO) have been recognized by the UN system as key players in eradicating poverty and achieving Sustainable Development. More than 190 environmental faith-based organizations have been addressing climate change, energy conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and reforestation, among others working at the global, regional and local levels.

The UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development (UN IATF-FBOs) was officially established in 2010 and is composed of 19 UN organizations including UN Environment. The main objectives of the interagency task force are to facilitate knowledge exchange, provide a resource pool of experiences, and strengthen partnerships with faith-based organizations. UN Environment has convened and conducted a number of important initiatives and conventions in partnership with faith-based organizations. The last of which was organized on 30 November 2017 in Nairobi specifically to discuss this strategy.

For centuries, faith-based organizations have provided socio-economic services to local communities, especially for poor and marginalized people. In some societies, political and religious leadership is combined in both formal and informal ways. Spiritual values for more than 80% of the people living on earth have been driving individual behaviors. Citizens faith-based organizations as being trustworthy and highly networked organizations with dynamism that enable them to operate and achieve on the ground results where and when needed. These organizations respond to the needs as well as the values of the community. So doing they have built credibility through delivering services in the areas of welfare, education, health and disaster relief among others. In many countries, spiritual beliefs and religious practices are interwoven with cultural values, social principles, political engagement, and economic prosperity. Understanding the dynamics of these beliefs practices at the local level and more generally the role of faith actors within local communities is crucial for intentional and systematic sustainable development. Donors have been increasing their reliance on and partnerships with faith-based organizations to channel much of the development aid. However, according to a research by the World

¹ The list of these environmental faith-based organizations has been compiled by UN Environment and by environmental faith-based organizations that participated in the strategy consultation meeting held in Nairobi on 20 November 2017). The list includes, religious connection and objectives. However, environment is also part of faith-based organizations with broader focus. Such organizations have also been collected.

² For UN Environment, cooperation with Faith-based Organizations dates back to 1986, when the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment (IPE) was created to initially inform North American congregations about the serious environmental problems facing life on Earth. The publication "Earth and Faith: A Book of Reflection for Action", published in 2000, highlighted the critical environmental issues confronting humankind at the beginning of a new millennium and UN efforts to address them. In June 2011, UN Environment hosted an event organized by the Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute (SAFCEI), the All Africa Churches Conference (AACC) and the Forum for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCUMURA) to discuss the position of faith groups on the environment and humanity, in particular climate change and its effects on Africa. In 2016, UN Environment, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Department of the Environment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, organized the 2nd Seminar on Environment, Culture and Religion.

Council of Churches³ NGOs including faith-based organizations are active in more countries than many governments, and they carry more credibility with taxpayers than do government aid agencies. Indeed, some individual NGOs have country programmes with larger budgets than the government ministries to which they relate.

The 2016 UN Environment publication on Environment, Religion and Culture in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explored the role of religion and culture in the implementation of the sustainable development goals; the role of different values systems and cultural diversity as resources for conservation, climate justice action, bridging between science and other knowledge systems. Attention was given to issues of education, traditional knowledge, rights of indigenous peoples, peacebuilding, gender, sustainability and economics, participation and civil mobilization.

The publication describes some of the interlinkages of religion, culture and the environment as well as the environmental and socioeconomic dimensions of sustainable development. It uses the five critical areas in the 2030 Agenda: people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership whose objective is to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first, in order to demonstrate the ways in which the sustainable development goals are interrelated with expressions of religion and spirituality in local communities. It concludes with a set of recommendations toward finding lasting solutions to these issues, to help free humanity from want and deprivation while fostering human wellbeing and strengthening efforts expressing duty of care.

It is also argued that the integrated approach should facilitate the integration of religious and cultural values to ensure inclusive green and transformative development through adopting values, faith-based lifestyles and behaviors to achieve sustainable consumption and production. Reaching to local, poorest and marginalized communities can significantly contribute to ending extreme poverty, leaving no one behind. The integrated approach coupled with cultural and religious values can promote innovative nature-based solutions, respect for traditional knowledge and cultural diversity, exercise environmental stewardship and duty of care.

It is more urgent than ever to promote creative solutions to achieving the SDGs. Coupling environmental concerns with duty of care, for example, can enhance the role of religion and culture working together to achieve sustainability. Religious practices and spiritual expressions align with many important topics of environmental ethics, including the value of the natural world, the need to stay within the planetary boundaries; the continuity between human and non-human forms of life; the moral significance of all living beings in the eyes of God and/or in the cosmic order; the mutual dependence of human life on the natural world and the principles of justice and other moral norms that reflect our responsibility to live in balance with nature.

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