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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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# UN Environment Strategy for Engaging with Faith-Bases Organizations

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November 2017



**Consultation Meeting Report  
9 January 2018**

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## **Overall Objective of the Meeting:**

The overall meeting objective was to discuss and endorse, with suggested changes, the UN Environment Strategy for Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations and provide key information on existing knowledge, networks and faith-based organizations.

## **Meeting Outcomes:**

By the end of the meeting, faith leaders will have:

1. Defined the goals of the strategic involvement directing UN Environment Focus;
2. Identified top priority environmental issues of mutual focus;
3. Agreed on a common knowledge platform to share knowledge and enable networking between environmental faith-based organizations
4. Agreed on outline for a communications and outreach needed actions.
5. Mapped global, regional and local Environmental FBOs;
6. Shared existing experiences and involvement;
7. Identified faith-based investment entities; and
8. Made commitments of specific support.

## **Meeting Summary:**

The United Nations Environment Programme has been engaging with faith-based organizations for many years, however, recognizing the prominent role that faith-based organizations play in the implementation of the 2030 agenda, as part of the engagement of different civil society organizations, UN Environment has adopted a strategic decision to step up and enhance its engagement as related to the environmental dimension of the sustainable development agenda. For such a strategic engagement, a corporate strategy was developed by UN Environment identifying its objectives, goals, principles as well as the activities it plans to launch to implement such a strategy. UN Environment believes that the development of the strategy would not be complete without proper consultation with faith-based organizations themselves, thus a consultation meeting was organized at the margins of the third UN Environment Assembly. More than 40 participants representing 8 religions from around the world took part in the consultation that was held on 30 November 2017 at the UN premises in Nairobi.

The purpose of the meeting was to agree on the Strategy goals and activities; identify top priority environmental issues of mutual focus; map global, regional and local environmental Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs); identify existing Knowledge management tools and networks; share existing experiences and involvement; identify faith-based investment entities; and make commitments of specific support. To facilitate achieving this purpose, a detailed pre-meeting questionnaire was shared with participants. Answers to the questionnaire were received prior, during and after the meeting has concluded. Participants representing the different faiths and organizations made a short presentation on the goals of their respective organizations, activities they have been engaged with and suggested their perspectives on what

and how UN Environment could enhance its role to lead the global coalition of environmental faith-based organizations.

The UN Environment Strategy for Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations aims to inspire, empower and engage with Faith-based Organizations to innovatively deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 at all levels. The strategy was designed with three major goals:

1. Strengthen Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations' Leadership for Policy Impact.
2. Green Faith-Based organization's assets and transform financing the SDGs.
3. Provide Science-Faith-Based Evidence and knowledge.

The Strategy provided a detailed list of outputs and corresponding activities to achieve each goal and suggested some institutional setup for the implementation of the strategy.

The consultation meeting started with an introductory part where the Executive Director of UN Environment Mr. Erik Solheim gave his opening remarks followed by Dr. Iyad Abumoghli, Principal Advisor on Strategic Engagement with Faith-Based Organizations, who gave a presentation on proposed strategy. Dr. Azza Karam, Chair of the UN Task Force on Religion and Development provided UN insights via Skype from New York followed by Mr. Alexander Juras, Chief of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Unit, who described the overall civil society engagement and the accreditation process. Meeting participants introduced their names, organizations they represent and their faith association.

Many of the organizations present shared their experiences on environmental stewardship, ranging from running international universities to national networks and local community activities. An open consultation with faith-based organizations took place focusing on the UN Environment Strategy, its goals, activities and looked into the questionnaire providing concrete suggestions on leadership, investment, and science, knowledge and communications.

Overall, participants have highly appreciated the key role UN Environment is playing by developing such a strategy and aiming for a strengthened partnership with faith-based organizations focusing on environmental issues. There was a unanimous approval of the three goals focusing on leadership, transforming faith-based investments and providing the needed knowledge. Different iterations of the third goal were suggested, some focusing on education, others on communications and outreach. It was agreed that the science part of this goal needs to focus on the provision of the knowledge that UN Environment provides as part of its science-policy interface work, while focus this goal on networking, communications and knowledge sharing.

Participants endorsed the creation of a forum or platform to exchange experiences, and share knowledge through provision of a dedicated page on the UN Environment Website or building on already existing faith-based run platforms. There needs to be a network of networks to assemble existing resources and best practices. It could also include reports on faith-environment events; annual events and a calendar of future events could be listed. For materials in other languages, it would be helpful to have a title or summary in English. Many activities are

being conducted by faith-based organizations, however, with little outreach. It should become a community of practice for knowledge sharing.

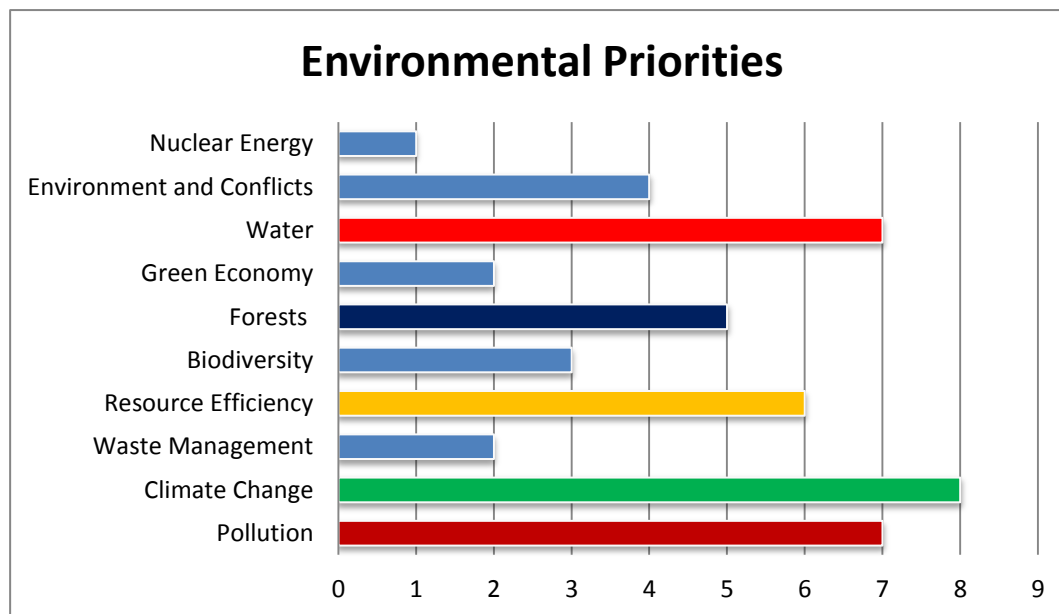
### Meeting's Key Messages:

- 1- FBOs are well placed to explore the root causes of environmental problems, and to express the values that speak to the heart.
- 2- The FBOs could help to move to transformational impacts, with an impact at the global level.
- 3- Faith communities have a long-term perspective, such as the First Nations in North America considering 7 generations. This will be an important contribution to UN Environment.
- 4- It is important to include youth in faith dialogues, and to build on their use of technologies.
- 5- Education to be subsumed in knowledge
- 6- Ethics and Values to be introduced – promote eco lifestyle based on this; “make humans human”
- 7- Need transformation – people are disconnected from Nature. Solution starts with awareness, personal responsibility, long term perspective
- 8- Advocacy is an important dimension
- 9- Leadership from the top
- 10- Investment goal to be expanded – to include accounting for ecological impact
- 11- Include traditional knowledge
- 12- Use 2030 SDG Agenda and let local community prioritize – all items are important, all related, all global and local
- 13- Waste management too limited – emphasis too on reduction of waste through change in lifestyle – link to “Sustainable Production and Consumption” – already a UN Environment global initiative
- 14- Everything today is expressed and valued in economic terms, and this is driving the world in unsustainable directions. Faith-based groups should advocate for alternatives.
- 15- Pollution and food waste were proposed as specific areas of focus for global impact. Faith-based organizations could support implementation of its outcomes. The theme of the next UN Environment Assembly has not yet been decided, but could become an area of focus. The UN Environment Assembly should have resolutions including the ethical dimension.
- 16- There was agreement that the initial focus could be on three priority environmental issues: pollution, water, and waste reduction and management. Water has an important symbolism in many religions that could be built on.
- 17- Identify scriptures that would reinforce the messages of UN Environment Assembly. Organizations could reflect on their work from a pollution perspective, and rephrase the issues in their own language, making them relevant to work at the local level.
- 18- Sustainable consumption and production could be a more cross-cutting alternative, beyond just resource efficiency. It already is a UN Environment global programme. Faith-based organizations could contribute to the 10-year Framework of Programmes on SCP.
- 19- On the goal to Strengthen Partnerships with Faith-Based Organizations’ Leadership for Policy Impact, it was noted that the Pope’s encyclical Laudato Si’ came from the top. A

global movement needs direction from the top so that the faithful will follow it. It would be good to reach the highest levels of leadership. An alternative view was to go from the local to the global, starting with letting local communities determine their own priorities, and building from there. **The strategy should not only target the poor but also the rich who are over-consuming and producing most environmental impacts. There is a rising middle class even in developing countries being drawn into the consumer society that needs to be reached.**

- 20- The present goal to green Faith-Based organization's assets and transform financing need not to be focused on finance, but should include a wider greening of Faith-Based organization's consumption, assets, buildings and lands.
- 21- For the goal on Science-Faith-Based Evidence, there was a feeling that the concept of science in this goal should be refined. Science should include traditional knowledge, which is often less organized. We need more than just knowledge and science. A holistic view is needed to transform people, and to help them reconnect with nature. An alternative would be to use the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs - and look for ways they embody faith beliefs. It is important to avoid the conflicts of science and religion, and to recognize their complementarity.
- 22- Faith-Based organizations made concrete commitments, for example the use of their networks to share messages more widely, the availability of knowledge resources, and training of trainers to reach the grassroots of communities. One suggestion for the future would be for the UN to consider creating a Forum of Faith-Based Organizations comparable to the Forum of Indigenous Peoples, to formalize the dialogue between governments and Faith-Based organization in the UN framework.

The following diagram represents the selection of key environmental priorities and their weight.



## Faith and Spiritual Congregations Attending:

Islam  
Christianity  
Buddhism  
Bahá'í  
Judaism  
Hinduism  
Brahma Kumaris  
Spirituality and interfaith organizations  
Global, national and local civil society representatives.

## Meeting Minutes

**Facilitator:** Iyad Abumoghli  
**Invited guests:** Erik Solheim, Azza Karam, and Alexander Juras  
**Venue & Technology:** Sylvia Adams  
**Rapporteur:** Giada Congiu

Minutes	Action Points
<p><b>1. Erik Solheim opening remarks</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Happy to see the leaders of faith-based organizations reunited at the table and acknowledged that there is still a lot of work to be done in engaging with them.</li><li>• Two reasons why UN and UN Environment has to engage with faith-based organizations:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ For many people, engagement with environment comes from religious beliefs. A large portion of the population is really engaged with the environment because they want to protect their one planet given by God.</li><li>○ In many parts of the world, the real civil society is faith-based organizations. In some parts of the world, European-style civil societies have relatively limited outreach as it is the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there are very few European-style civil societies but many churches. Faith-based organizations provide a very practical instrument to resolve daily life problems.</li></ul></li><li>• Historically, religion has been very important for political power. Fukuyama, for instance, linked political power to two issues: religion and wars. Fukuyama also makes a comparison between four different cultural areas (China, India, Middle East and Islam, and Europe and Christianity) that have completely different approaches to religion.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ China is the least religious part of the planet, where no religious leader has ever had more power than a political leader</li></ul></li></ul>	

- India, conversely, is the most religious part of the planet, where religion is more than or as equally important as the state
- Islam and the Middle East, where religious leaders are the political leaders and vice versa
- Europe where religion and political power have been in competition for thousands of years
- Emphasized the importance of a partnership with faith-based organizations for leadership as in the case of an interfaith conference to protect the rainforest which may take place in Brazil in 2019.
- Religious societies are key investors for religious purposes (for instance, Islamic Development Bank and the Church of England) that are starting to mobilize funds and issue divesting principles to tackle environmental issues.
- Leadership is a key factor. Actions are taking place all around the world but we need to do more to have the impact that we are aiming for.

**Erik encouraged all participants to provide new and effective ideas on how to achieve a long-lasting partnership between UN and faith-based organizations**

### 1.1 Round of introductions

Participants have introduced themselves, their institutions and religion they represent. A list of participants is attached to the report.

### 1.2 Iyad Abumoghli presented the UN Environment Strategy

- The SDGs were designed by people and the implementation of these goals should also be by the people and all stakeholders, including faith-based organizations. Innovative ways to **engage with people and stakeholders** are needed.
- 8 out of 10 people believe in and follow a faith.
- UN has been working with faith-based organizations for many years and has engaged with them at the community level. However, UN has not been very engaged with faith-based organizations on environmental issues

**Need to capitalize on the already existing faith-based organizations working**

**预览已结束，完整报告链接和二维码如下：**

[https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5\\_14558](https://www.yunbaogao.cn/report/index/report?reportId=5_14558)

