

Inputs from Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences

I am responding to your call for comments as a member of the Faith for Earth Advisory Board headed by Dr Iyad Moghli.

I had the privilege in 1995 to chair a conference of religious leaders committed to working together to save the Earth from further destruction by the processes that we have set up to ostensibly better ourselves. This was before the idea of sustainability took currency but which has yet to take hold in a meaningful way. This conference took place in Japan and it was organized jointly by WWF, the UK based Alliance of Religion and Conservation and the Mokichi Ocada Association a Japanese spiritual organization that supported the event generously. What emerged from this was the Ohito Declaration for Religion Land and Conservation. It contained ten common environmental principles drawn from the deep wells of wisdom of the nine traditions that participated in the event. They are true today as they have been for generations and I submit the following ten areas of action, where the participating traditions found common ground, for consideration by the President of UNEA.

1. Religious beliefs and traditions call us to care for the Earth.
2. For people of faith maintaining and sustaining environmental life systems is a moral responsibility.
3. Nature should be treated with respect and compassion, thus forming a basis for our sense of responsibility for conserving plants, animals, land, water, air and energy.
4. Environmental understanding is enhanced when people learn from the example of prophets, teachers and of nature itself.
5. Markets and trade arrangements should reflect the physical and spiritual needs of people and their communities to ensure health, justice and harmony. Justice and equity principles of faith traditions should be used for maintaining and sustaining environmental life systems.
6. People of faith should give more emphasis to a higher quality of life in preference to a higher standard of living, recognizing that greed and avarice are the root causes of environmental degradation and human debasement.
7. All faiths should fully recognize and promote the role of women in environmental sustainability.
8. People of faith should be fully involved in the conservation and development process. Development of the environment must take better account of its effects on the community and its religious beliefs.
9. Faith communities should endorse multilateral consultation in a form that recognizes the value of local/indigenous wisdom and current scientific information.
10. In the context of faith perspective, emphasis should be given not only to the globalization of human endeavours but also to participatory community action.

Fazlun Khalid | Founder

Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences
93 Court Road, Birmingham B12 9LQ, UK