

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Table of content

Faith Communities Enabling Inclusive & Equitable Cities

Launch of Online Courses

Faith for Earth: A Call to Action

The Role of Accredited Faith-based Organisations

Grassroot Interfaith Action for Climate Justice

Working Group on Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Faith for Earth Youth Coalition: UK Youth Council

The Innovation Expo

Religion-Science Consortium

Faith, Values and Ethics in Environmental Governance

Strengthening Linkages between Faith Communities and Nature-Based Solutions

What the World Expects from FBOs and What We Should Do

Local Challenges, Local Solutions: Faith Groups for Environmental Action

Religions in Action for the Protection and Restoration of Forests: Lessons from the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative in Brazil, Colombia, DRC and Peru

Mindfulness, Faith and Sustainability

The Power of Faith Partnerships to Safeguard Nature: PaRD a Case in Point

Faith and Food: Nature Positive Solutions for a Flourishing World

Faith in Action: Only One Earth

Faith – the Solution to Pollution?

Faith for Stockholm+50

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith Communities Enabling Inclusive & Equitable Cities

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday, 21 February 2022; 10am -11.30am East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

The connection between religion and spiritual ethics in advancing the need to care for the planet is an area that is well explored. This session at the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2 draws particular attention to the often underserved connection and potential of faith actors within smaller ecosystems such as cities.

Drawing from the Abrahamic religions to illustrate the previous point is the presence of the word 'city', as well as the mentioning of cities names in religious texts and scripture. For example, in the Bible, there are 28 verses about cities and in the holy Quran cities or towns were mentioned 74 times. Not only were cities built around religious sites, but sacred books also highlighted how God referred to our connection with cities:

"Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare," (Jeremiah 29:7) and "Enter this city and eat freely from where you please; enter the gate with humility, saying, 'Absolve us.' We will forgive your sins and multiply the reward for the good-doers," (Quran Chapter 2 verse 58) are some examples.

In our modern day and age, the creation of safe and sustainable urban living spaces is an essential need and faith actors offer the 'missing piece' in achieving this need. By 2050, [66%](#) of the world's population is expected to reside in urban areas. Consequently, to mitigate climate change and guarantee a safe and prosperous future for all, cities need to be sustainable, efficient and smart, thus working in tandem for the people and the environment.

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2: Faith Communities Enabling Inclusive & Equitable Cities
Concept Note

In that context, SDG 11 focuses on the creation of [sustainable cities and communities](#). This is to be achieved through the renewal of cities, as well as the planning of sustainable cities and other human settlements that allow for equal opportunities for all (i.e., access to basic

services, energy, housing, transportation and green public spaces) while reducing the exploitation of natural resources and the degradation of our natural environments.

Cities and Religion

While urban places might often be considered as being noisy, polluted and overcrowded concrete jungles, those areas have rich religious cultural heritage. Cities are multi-faceted and multi-sector systems with many moving parts, with religion and faith being factors that play an important role in the cultural and socio-economic prosperity within cities.

Since the beginning of time, religions have significantly influenced the way cities are constructed and function. Cities were established around houses of worship that provided essential services and today, multiple religious markers are scattered around every city around the world, ranging from small local churches to cathedrals, mosques, synagogues, charity shops, schools, monuments of remembrance, gardens and parks, cemeteries, and others.

Often, the real power and influence that religions have on the cities and their dwellers are undermined. However, on a global scale, religious institutions own around 8% of habitable land, as well as more than 50% of educational institutions, mostly in cities. Additionally, houses of worship and other religious locations are important sources of socio-economic activity, as yearly pilgrimages and religious vacation tours bring millions of people to various cities around the world. Consequently, these institutions shape the economy and behaviour of people living in urban areas. Faith also has a deep-rooted social function, uniting people in urban areas and creating communities that practice, celebrate, mourn, remember, and reflect together, while also providing support to those in need.

Purpose of Session

This session will provide a space to discuss the interlinkages between creating inclusive and equitable people-centered cities and the role world religions, their communities, and faith leaders play in bringing forward SDG 11.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Launch of Online Courses

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday, 21 February 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

An integral part of Faith for Earth's work is building the capacities of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) to more effectively inspire their followers to engage in environmental action and evaluate their contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To this end, since 2017 Faith for Earth has organised or contributed to several conferences, dialogues, and capacity building workshops. These activities continued throughout 2020 and 2021 in the form of online events, adapting to the disruptions wrought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2020, Faith for Earth took part in the release of the "Faith4SDGs" project, a free digital storytelling series showcasing the contributions of faith communities to the SDGs, launched by King Abdullah bin Abdul-Aziz's International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue ([KAICIID](#)). Discussions included how faith communities can collaborate with political decision-makers to develop and implement policies on diverse issues; identify gaps that could be better addressed if religious actors are regularly included in multilateral efforts for development and aid; and how faith communities are uniquely positioned to help respond to health and environmental crises. Overall, it sought to help religious actors and policymakers speak the same language around development and environmental issues and promote sustainable development from the grassroots to global level.

In December 2020, as a result of the above engagement, Faith for Earth further strengthened its collaboration with KAICIID. The latter brings a wealth of experience in promoting interreligious dialogue, building collaborative partnerships and engaging in high-level forums – invaluable assets for the Faith for Earth Initiative. Faith for Earth partnered with KAICIID to produce online courses that will be made available to relevant stakeholders as a capacity development tool (FBOs, NGOs, government officials, policymakers etc).

Since May 2020, Faith for Earth has also partnered with the [Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology](#) (FORE), aiming to build on both organisations' expertise on ecological issues and multireligious work. Yale FORE has accumulated a wealth of experience, resources, publications and knowledge in this field, as well as a wide network of partner faith organisations that have implemented projects and programmes around the world. Besides cooperating in events and workshops, Faith for Earth and Yale FORE have co-authored the book "[Faith for Earth: a Call for Action](#)" jointly with the Parliament of World's Religions. Launched in October 2020, the book comprehensively explores different theological

perspectives that the world's religions have towards the natural environment, demonstrating the intricate linkage between faith and nature.

Online Course: Engaging Faith Actors to Support the Implementation Process of the SDGs
In partnership with UPEACE, LWF, ISCREB and Faith for Earth, KAICIID developed the joint e-learning course *Engaging Faith Actors to Support the Implementation Process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, which consists of seven modules. Inspired by the "Faith for Earth: a Call for Action" book, Faith for Earth produced Module 4 in this series, which highlights the importance of engaging with faith actors and an overall approach on the interlinkages between religion and the environment. The course's full list of modules is shown below:

- 1- Engaging Faith Actors to Support the Implementation Process of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through Interreligious Dialogue
- 2- Mainstreaming the SDGs into National Policy and Planning Processes
- 3- The Role of Faith Actors and Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) in Implementing SDG 16
- 4- Faith for Earth: A Time for Action
- 5- Countering Hate Speech Through the Promotion of IRD and Cooperation for Peace
- 6- Assessing Faith-Based Actors' Contributions to the SDGs
- 7- Using the KAICIID Peace Map to Analyse the Connection between SDGs and IRD Organizations

Each module can be completed separately as a self-paced short course. This course is available in the [KAICIID Dialogue Knowledge Hub](#).

Online Course: Faith, Environment and Climate Change

Thereafter, Faith for Earth and KAICIID are continuing with the fruitful partnership and agreed on creating another package of online courses, this time focussing on the intersection of faith and various aspects of environmental sustainability. The new initiative, named *Faith, Environment and Climate Change*, consists of a series of eight modules, all of them produced by Faith for Earth in partnership with KAICIID:

- 1- Faith for Earth: A time for Action
- 2- Faith for Earth and Climate Change
- 3- Faith for Earth and Water
- 4- Faith for Earth and Environmental Governance
- 5- Faith for Earth and Financing for Sustainable Development
- 6- Faith for Earth and Ecosystems Restoration
- 7- Faith for Earth and Environmental Security
- 8- Faith for Earth and Sustainable Lifestyles

The first module is an introductory to the series, while the subsequent seven modules focus on a specific environmental theme each, aligning with UNEP Programmatic areas. These thematic modules provide an overview of the respective environmental issue, explore the different faith perspectives on the issue, and indicate how FBOs can take action to address the issue in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Notably, the modules provide focal knowledge and resources about environmental challenges, while offering practical guidance, tools, approaches, and methodologies on how faith actors can make tangible contributions to the implementation of the SDGs at all levels. These modules will form part of a consolidated platform where other organisations engaging in this field will share their knowledge and best practices.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on Religions and Ecology: Restoring the Earth Community

Yale FORE has partnered with Coursera to develop a set of free online courses titled [Religions and Ecology: Restoring the Earth Community](#). These Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) explore the ecological dimensions of the world's religions. Developed over the course of several years, they draw on a rich variety of lectures, videos, readings, and interviews with scholars, religious leaders, and environmental practitioners from around the world. The six courses offered under this theme are:

- 1- Introduction to Religions and Ecology
- 2- Indigenous Religions and Ecology (Africa, Asia, Americas, Pacific Regions)
- 3- South Asian Religions and Ecology (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Baha'i Faith)
- 4- East Asian Religions and Ecology (Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shinto, Korean Shamanism)
- 5- Western Religions and Ecology (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)
- 6- Christianity and Ecology (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical)

These courses have recently been made available in the [Coursera platform](#) and are suitable for a wide audience including lifelong learners, environmental professionals, members of NGO and non-profit organisations, students, teachers, policymakers, faith communities, religious leaders and laity. The courses are supplemented with the robust Yale FORE website, which features several resources such as statements, publications, and environmental projects of the world's religions, and highlights actions of religions on the climate emergency and ecojustice. Notably, Yale FORE has developed a comprehensive [database on faith-based engagement with the environmental SDGs](#) (6, 7, 12, 13, 14 & 15) that is updated on a quarterly basis, highlighting the ever-growing engagement of faith actors in this field. This database and how FBOs can submit their contributions could also be outlined during the session.

Purpose of Session

- Promotion for capacity building.



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

UNEA 5.2 Faith for Earth Dialogue

Faith for Earth: A Call to Action

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday, 21 February 2022; 5.30pm-7pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Faith for Earth: A Call for Action - describes the essential, unshakeable reverence that all religions have for creation and nature and introduces the world's major life support systems. We hope the book will give you information and inspiration to learn more about our planet, to share your knowledge and commitment to care for it, and to become part of the flourishing global interfaith movement that is increasingly bringing people together to protect and sustain life on Earth.

In the last 60 years, more than 40% of the world's civil wars have been linked to control over natural resources such as land, oil, and water. Climate change is on track to make this situation worse, with unprecedented new impacts on the functioning ecosystems we depend upon for survival, as well as on where people can live and grow food, build cities, practice their faith, and raise their children in peace and health. The security implications of climate change are being recognized at the highest levels, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres has put it at the heart of our conflict prevention agenda. The Secretary-General announced in April 2020 that "the global crisis we are facing today due to COVID19 pandemic is the gravest challenge since the establishment of the UN 75 years ago," but it also remains an irrefutable fact that climate change continues to be one of the most systemic environmental threats that humankind has ever faced.

We are in a race against time that will require political will, innovation, inclusion, tolerance, values and ethics, financing and partnerships. We are calling on everyone—countries, cities, the private sector, individuals, and faith-based organizations—to strengthen their actions to mitigate climate change, restore ecosystems, and protect the health of the planet without delay. The world has the scientific understanding, the technological capacity, and the financial means to do this. We need to trust our abilities and act accordingly.

Our challenge is not that we do not know what to do—it is how quickly we can do it. The problem is massive, and such large and complex challenges will require transformational thinking, integration, and big movements. But it will also require progress on myriad smaller



and manageable scales. We need faith-based organizations to be part of the global accountability and monitoring system to achieve the sustainable development goals, and we need a common ethical system of values no matter what religion we believe.

Way Forward

As we begin this century's third decade, the new edition – produced through a partnership between the United Nations Environment Programme and the Parliament of the World's Religions Climate Action Program – offers an introduction to the magnitude of the task we now face and to the faith communities that are becoming a force for the global environmental future. It is time, as never before, to call on our faith, our values, our religious teachings and traditions – on Faith for Earth. And it is time for action.

Purpose of Session

A quick look at the uptake of the book by different religious organizations as well as discuss ways and means to strengthen it by discussing with scientific institutions its adoption as a global resource in educational institutions as a resource book, while digitizing some relevant training courses emanating from its different chapters.



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

UNEA 5.2 Faith for Earth Dialogue

The Role of Accredited Faith-based Organisations

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday: Friday, 22 February 2022; 2pm -3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

FBOs accredited with UNEP can effectively engage in the design and implementation of UNEP global programs and initiatives. As Civil Society Organizations, they play a central role in providing expertise and scientific knowledge, informing local needs and opinions, as well as identifying and assessing the “on the ground” realities of policy decisions.¹ Public engagement on the environment by and with accredited FBOs, therefore, adds unique value towards achieving environmental sustainability.

Currently, there are 53 UNEP accredited faith-based organizations. To inspire meaningful engagement, it is crucial to inform accredited FBOs of the avenues to engage in a meaningful and impactful discussion with the processes like UNEA and with the wider stakeholder group. Faith for Earth offers to facilitate the exchange of views and develop common ground to mobilize creative solutions to environmental challenges – particularly amongst the 50+ accredited organisations. Accredited FBOs are offered this session to learn about what participation and influence mechanisms they could employ so they can act effectively in the diplomatic sphere of inter-governmental decision-making at the UN Environment Programme.

UNEA 5.1 approved UNEP’s new Medium-Term Strategy (MTS), which outlines a trajectory for UNEP to strengthen the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda during the period 2022–2025. The three environmental crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are at the heart of the MTS. The resumed session of UNEA-5 (UNEA 5.2) will follow up on relevant mandates emanating from the outcomes of previous sessions and deal with thematic reports which cover a wide range of environmental issues and program implementation. It presents

¹ <https://www.unep.org/civil-society-engagement/accreditation>



an opportunity for accredited FBOs to actively engage in the discussion of UNEP policies and programs, collaborate with major groups and stakeholders, and influence thematic issues.

Purpose of Session

This session at the [Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#) will provide accredited FBOs with an opportunity to reflect on the level of engagement that accredited organisations should exhibit and present a strong case for the integration of UNEPs priorities into their own programmes. Equally participant FBOs in turn will identify how Faith for Earth is a mechanism to better integrate the unique perspectives and influence of FBOs in UNEPs PoW.

The Dialogue will also be a platform for accredited FBOs to share their perspectives and experiences on environment protection, specifically on how to promote civic engagement and inspire actions based on Indigenous or religious knowledge. By presenting their projects and identifying best practices, accredited FBOs will learn from others, create more avenues for collaborations, and possibly widen their scope of work.

Goals and objectives of the session include:

- Identify how to incentivize accredited FBOs to actively engage in UNEP’s decision-making process. Explore coordination mechanisms with the Civil Society Unit and other Major Groups and Stakeholders.
- Share best practices and experience among accredited FBOs regarding how to engage with intergovernmental organizations.
- Select a team of coordinators among accredited FBOs to keep the network more engaged.

Resources

- [For People and Planet: The UNEP Strategy for 2022-2025](#)
- [Faith for Earth Strategy](#)
- [Accreditation with UNEP](#)

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Grassroot Interfaith Action for Climate Justice

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

Date: Tuesday, 22 February 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

[Register](#)

Background

Climate change poses a severe threat to humans and wildlife worldwide. Its impacts will continue to increase water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and extreme weather events. With the latest IPCC report stating that we must act now to mitigate the worst impacts of the climate crisis, including all potential actors is crucial. Faith actors and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are known to engage in social causes and have been addressing environmental issues, including climate change at the local, national, and international level. With the influence and reach of FBOs and Faith leaders, it is crucial to show their support and empower FBOs and their followers to take climate action.

FBOs' Role, Engagement and Achievements

UN Environment Program (UNEP)'s Faith for Earth Initiative aims to include FBOs and Faith actors in taking climate action and inspiring their followers to engage in such efforts. Since the launch of the initiative in 2017, numerous measures have been taken to engage FBOs and Faith leaders in climate action initiatives with a focus on spreading awareness about the climate crisis, capacity-building activities, the intersection of climate change and other sectors in society, and on increasing youth engagement.

To **spread awareness** about the climate crisis amongst faith actors and leaders, Faith for Earth has participated in and hosted numerous in-person events and global webinars focusing on discussing and exploring ways to take climate action. The Initiative has presented the invaluable contribution of faith actors during expert consultations about climate change with and beyond the UN system. Faith for Earth has also worked to highlight the intersection of climate change with other sectors and parts of society through new workstreams and discussions. For instance, World Environment Day 2019 **experienced a significant increase** in the [number of FBOs participating](#), with hundreds of events organized globally, nationally, and locally. During World Environment Day 2020, Faith for Earth co-organized a high-level

webinar, [Faith for Earth Climate Change and Environmental Justice](#) where leading experts from diverse fields convened to discuss best practices and how to incorporate faith actors. Over 135 faith leaders and representatives of 56 FBOs and congregations participated during the Faith for Earth Interfaith Dialogue.

An integral part of Faith for Earth's work is also **building the capacities** of FBOs to inspire their followers, engage in climate action and evaluate their contributions to the SDGs more effectively. Faith for Earth work, together with numerous faith leaders, to encourage climate action awareness and initiatives, for example, by participating in the Multi-Faith working group on climate action. In 2021, Faith for Earth supported the [Faith and Science global appeal](#) on October 4 where faith leaders representing Earth's major religions joined scientists at the Vatican to call on the international community to step up their climate action and raise their ambitions ahead of COP26.

Finally, Faith for Earth is **supporting youth engagement** worldwide. In 2020, the initiative organized, together with numerous other organizations and the Philippine Government, the *Philippine Interfaith Summit on Climate Emergency*. Faith for Earth has supported a training called "Young Khalifas of the Earth" by communicating a message to improve Islamic youth participation and involvement in climate action campaigning. The main goal has been **to empower young people** to be aware of environmental challenges, such as the urgency to respond to the climate crisis, and approach solutions based on their faith.

The Multifaith Working Group on Climate Action

Recognising the great potential of FBOs for inspiring behaviour change and catalysing action to address current environmental challenges, UNEP's Faith for Earth initiative partnered with a diverse group of FBOs to create the Working Group on Climate Action. It aims at facilitating a global interfaith response to the climate crisis through engaging the faith community in addressing climate issues, mobilising the power and influence of faith leaders and communities particularly at a grassroots level, identifying critical challenges and providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and learning globally, regionally, and locally.

Way Forward

To achieve these objectives and mitigate climate change, there is an urgent need for the promotion of concrete, immediate and bold action at all levels:

- **Capacity building:** To implement concrete and efficient strategies, it is crucial that FBOs are empowered to effectively inspire their followers to engage in climate action and evaluate their contributions to the SDGs. This can be achieved through the establishment of online conferences, dialogues, and capacity building workshops as well as the dissemination of educational materials about the importance of climate action related to their faiths, with actions that they can take in their everyday lives to bring about change.
- **Youth engagement:** As they are part of a more environmentally conscious generation, it is essential that youths are mobilized, that their actions are strengthened, and that



their voices are uplifted. As faith-based youth can be invaluable assets in spurring momentum, they need to be fully supported so they can continue to influence environmental decision-making processes.

- **Gender approach:** It is essential to address climate action with a gender approach. Women make up 70% of the world's population living in poverty and produce more than half of the world's cultivated foods. Given the poorest and most marginalized people - such as those who depend directly on crop yields for their livelihoods - are the most vulnerable to climate change, women are on the front lines. With economic inequality, barriers to education, and endemic gender bias, fully incorporating the most vulnerable groups at the frontline of climate action, despite the least resources, is essential.
- **Promote action:** Promoting action could be achieved by communicating materials linking faith perspectives and climate action, establishing mechanisms for interfaith dialogue to advance climate action (such as soliciting interest to join climate movements by FBOs), by identifying and analyzing obstacles to progress and developing joint strategies to accelerate ambition and related goals ahead of UNEA 5.2 and COP26, and by supporting innovative solutions and adaptations to climate impacts.
- **Support and highlight the work of Indigenous peoples and local communities:** It is also essential to uplift indigenous practices and knowledge, as indigenous peoples have long histories of sustainable co-existence with their territories and the natural resources contained within: they are already safeguarding nearly one-fifth of the total carbon sequestered by tropical and subtropical forests and their territories encompass 40% of protected areas globally². Indeed, indigenous territories, critical habitats for biodiversity and ecosystem restoration, are key to mitigating the effects of climate change, acting as carbon sinks³.

To move forward, it is also an absolute necessity to **stop isolating and compartmentalizing climate change issues**, as all the environmental, social, and economic crises are interlinked. Whether it is at the international level, or at the individual level, climate change is linked with every aspect of our lives: the way we consume, buy, and eat, as well as our transportation means, hygiene, even our hobbies. It must be emphasised that tackling climate change requires holistic approaches and cannot be achieved by singular activities alone, such as the planting of trees. This is imperative to ensure that good intentions actually result in tangible outcomes.

Purpose of Session

- Create a space for dialogue and exchange of views about climate impacts and practical actions FBOs can take to address them
- Provide guidelines and toolkits to help FBOs and faith leaders to organize for concrete actions in their local communities and broader networks

² Townsend, J., Moola, F. and Craig, M. (2020). Indigenous Peoples are critical to the success of nature-based solutions to climate change. *Facets*, 5(1), 551-556. <https://doi.org/10.1139/facets-2019-0058>.

³ *Ibid.*



- Promote an interfaith collaboration and inclusive perspective to climate action
- Support bold actions and grassroots movements
- Share success stories of interfaith cooperation from the field



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

UNEA 5.2 Faith for Earth Dialogue

Working Group on Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Wednesday, 23 February 2022; 4pm -5.30am East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

The world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and it has become evident that a new relationship between people and the planet needs to be forged. Thus, biodiversity and the protection of ecosystems are considered crucial components in addressing environmental issues in general. The continued degradation of ecosystems and decline of terrestrial and marine biodiversity are significant contributors to climate change, and restoration is a massive but crucial challenge in achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In the light of the above considerations, UNEP committed to tackling biodiversity decline and the impacts of ecosystem destruction, launching the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration \(2021-2030\)](#) in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Calling for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world, it recognizes that healthy ecosystems are fundamental in enhancing people's livelihoods, counteracting climate change, and halting the collapse of biodiversity. Running from 2021 through 2030, the UN Decade seeks to build a "strong, broad-based global movement to ramp up restoration and put the world on track for a sustainable future" (Decade on Restoration, 2021), including building political momentum for restoration and launch a wide range of initiatives on the ground.

In June 2021, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat released the [first draft of a new Global Biodiversity Framework](#). Made up of 21 targets for 2030, this framework seeks to guide actions worldwide to "preserve and protect nature and its essential services to people". In October 2021, world leaders gathered both virtually and in Kunming (China) for the first phase of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15), which concluded with the adoption of the [Kunming Declaration](#) under the theme "Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth". Parties to the Convention agreed to "develop, adopt and implement an effective post-2020 global biodiversity framework that would put biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 at the latest, towards the full realization of the 2050 Vision of *Living in Harmony with Nature*." The declaration calls for "urgent and integrated" steps to tackle decreasing biodiversity around the world, with

particular emphasis on how many different sectors of the global economy have contributed, both directly and indirectly, to a dangerous decrease in habitats and species over the past century. Ecosystem restoration (ESR) is reflected in diverse actions such as new mangroves, grass or other plantings, natural or assisted regeneration, agroforestry, land rehabilitation measures, or improved and sustainable management to support a patchwork of terrestrial, aquatic or marine use patterns.

FBO's Role, Engagement and Achievements

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are increasingly committed to protecting and restoring natural spaces which are endangered, and hold great potential for inspiring behaviour change, catalyse action and promote nature-based solutions in order to preserve the ecosystems that underpin human society.

The [Faith and Ecosystems Strategy](#), titled “Strategy for Engagement: The Role of Faith Leaders and Faith-Based Organisations in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)” highlights how several barriers outlined in the UN Decade can be overcome by the social and political influences of faith communities around the world. As FBOs [control](#) 8% of the Earth’s habitable land and 5% of commercial forests, incorporating FBO landholdings in UN ecosystem restoration strategies is indeed a big step towards the regeneration of the earth’s damaged ecosystems. Equally, as mentioned in the Faith and Ecosystems Strategy, Faith leaders and actors can also intervene politically in powerful ways to induce governments at all levels to prioritize and invest in ecosystem restoration. Spreading knowledge on how spiritual and religious teachings and practices are linked to the protection of the environment can have an enormous impact on ecosystems and biodiversity, and it is thus critical to adopt an integrated approach of religious and cultural values in the implementation of the UN Decade.

Thus, a wide range of activities have been documented, highlighting faith-based efforts in tackling biodiversity loss. One example being the [Tewahedo Church initiative](#) in Ethiopia which aims to save hectares of symbolic and endemically biodiverse forests from logging and clearing for agriculture. The 35,000 forests, that range from a few acres to much larger areas are owned by Orthodox Tewahedo churches and are remnants of the natural forests that once covered much of the country. Another great example of faith-based commitment towards ecosystem restoration is the Sikh global movement of [Planting One Million Trees](#), intending to reconnect people with nature and celebrating its inherent power.

The [Living Chapel](#) was launched at the Vatican Botanical Garden in June 2020, associated with UNEP’s One Trillion Tree Movement in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), [Plant for the Planet](#) and the [Global Catholic Climate Movement](#). Drawing upon this great example of “intercultural and interfaith collaboration to restore our common home”, the concept of Green Sacred Spaces catalyses faith communities’ commitment towards tackling climate change and ecosystem destruction through sustainable energy practices and building and renovating houses of worship to be more energy efficient.

The **Faiths for Forests campaign** is an advocacy movement to mobilise FBOs with an emphasis on advocating for the rights of Indigenous people and forest communities that are most adversely

affected by ecosystem degradation. The Faiths for Forests is “a global call to action to all faith-based organisations, networks and places of worship around the world to join the movement to end destruction of the planet’s rainforests and advocate for climate justice”. It forms part of the invaluable work being done by the [Interfaith Rainforest Initiative](#) of UNEP.

The Multifaith Working Group on Biodiversity and Ecosystems

Recognising the great potential of FBOs for inspiring behaviour change and catalysing action to address current environmental challenges, UNEP’s Faith for Earth initiative partnered with a diverse group of FBOs to create the Working Group on Biodiversity and Ecosystems. It aims at facilitating a global interfaith response to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation through engaging the faith community in addressing the issue by mobilising the power and influence of faith leaders and communities particularly at a grassroots level, identifying critical challenges and providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and learning globally, regionally, and locally. The Working Group also explores the theological and philosophical basis of the current environmental crisis, and offer insights into how humanity can re-orientate itself to being in harmony and balance with nature.

Way Forward

- **Engagement of young faith leaders:** Because environmental and climate impacts will affect today’s youth and future generation the most, their voices and actions need to be uplifted. Young people and youth have already been advocating and calling for paradigm shifts and structural reforms and tend to have a better sense of urgency and awareness of the issues we face. There is a need for the creation, enhancement, and multiplication of workshops, conferences, and webinars on youth faith engagement towards biodiversity and ecosystems restoration, and the need to find innovative solutions and approaches.
- **Education and capacity building:** In order to restore the world’s endangered ecosystems in a sustainable manner, there is a need to provide knowledge resources on biodiversity and ecosystem restoration for faith communities worldwide. It is also crucial to enhance the preservation and promotion of indigenous and traditional knowledge. [Indigenous peoples represent](#) only 5% of the world’s population, but their lands cover 22% of its surface and 80% of the world’s biodiversity is found within Indigenous lands. In addition, Indigenous peoples interpret and react to biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation in creative ways, drawing on their intimate connection to the land through traditional knowledge and other technologies to find solutions which may help society at large to cope with impending changes.
- **Advocacy:** Grassroots movements and initiatives are a major part of the solution to halt the global biodiversity crisis. But it is also crucial to have a global approach because everyone has a role to play, and the search for solutions should be multilevel, collaborative, and interdisciplinary. This includes building political momentum for restoration. To that ends, the [‘Becoming #GenerationRestoration: Ecosystem Restoration for People, Nature and Climate’](#) report summarised the barriers that have been identified for this UN Decade. Six major barriers that need to be addressed have been identified, showing the importance of advocacy efforts:

1. Public awareness
2. Political will
3. Lack of legislation and policy
4. Technical capacity
5. Perceived financial risk
6. Scientific research

According to the report, the strategy for overcoming the aforementioned barriers involves three pathways to implementation of Ecosystem Restoration:

- *Pathway one: **Generate a global movement.*** A bottom-up approach. This will focus on changing attitudes and perspectives
- *Pathway two: **Changing political will.*** A top-down approach. This will assist societal leaders to champion ESR, amend policy and legislative frameworks
- *Pathway three: **Improving technical capacity.*** Applying best practice. This will seek to promote the importance of science, indigenous and traditional knowledge systems

Purpose of Session

- Create a space for dialogue and exchange of views, ideas, and practices on biodiversity protection and ecosystem restoration related issues and activities
- Introduce the purpose and efforts of the Working Group on Biodiversity and Ecosystems, outlining practical steps to contribute towards it
- Promote interfaith collaboration and inclusive perspectives to ecosystems restoration

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith for Earth Youth Coalition: UK Youth Council

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Thursday, 24 February 2022; 2pm -3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Faith plays a clear role in people’s motivations and their values, however there does not seem to be a place for young people in the UK for different faiths to come together to talk about and fight for climate action and ecosystem restoration. Young people are the future and it is ourselves that we are aiming to protect the world for, so that we can live on it peacefully and safely. Young people are also known for their high level of global interconnectedness especially through social media – meaning they are significantly abler to provide social leadership on all levels. Close to half a million youth around the world have taken action on climate change through SGP [small grants programmes] projects in their homes, schools and communities. [UNDP, Fast Facts: Youth and Climate Change, 2015, <http://goo.gl/Luyn3P>]. The two factors of youth and faith are both extremely strong in advocating for the climate alone, however this UK Youth Council aims to bring forward a strategy in the UK to bring those two groups together to create a stronger alliance to engage with the United Nations in favour of climate action and environmental sustainability; showing how youth and their faiths can overcome our need for overconsumption.

FBO's Role, Engagement and Achievements

The Faith for Nature Conference held in October 2020 has resulted in “Our Sacred Commitment” declaration and called for the establishment of the Faith for Earth Coalition at UNEP. As one of the four Coalition Councils established under the Faith for Earth Coalition, the Youth Council will be composed of young faith leaders (15-30) as well as leaders of youth movements advocating for the protection of the Earth. It is a platform to mobilize young people as global ambassadors for Faith for Earth across the Coalition and beyond. Participating young leaders will highlight how to address environmental degradation and climate change at the local level and will encourage innovation, mobilize actions, especially focusing on the local level. The Youth Council aims to promote an understanding of the connection between faith principles and environmental issues among young people. In addition, regional and Local sub-councils will mobilize youth on the ground and implement Coalition projects and activities in local faith communities.

Way Forward

Having established the general structure, purposes and expected plans and outcomes of the UK Youth Council, we hope to further explore details regarding its official launch, work plan and strategy.

Purpose of Session

- Explore the ideas to implement in the Faith for Earth UK Youth Council, including introductions to members, a launch plan, work plan and strategy.
- Discuss pledges and commitments of UNEP Faith for Earth UK Youth Council
- Exploring climate action work of all participating youth council members
- Identify priority action areas for the engagement of faith-based youth organizations, based on a global mapping of youth-faith Organizations, which identifies their engagement and networks.



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

The Innovation Expo

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Thursday, 24 February 2022; 5:30pm-7:00pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Overview

Addressing the immense environmental challenges we face today requires the adoption of innovative approaches that draw on new ideas, technologies, means of mobilising action, as well as rekindling old traditions. Sustainable innovation is required across all areas of human activity, with all sectors of society having a role to play in transitioning to a more sustainable future: faith actors and faith-based organisations (FBOs) being no exception. Indeed, FBOs have already been active in promoting action across their communities and implementing new approaches to address environmental challenges. Engagement in this area now needs to be scaled up to ensure FBOs partner with other organisations (both faith-based and secular) to share best-practices on innovative approaches that help to reduce our negative impact on the environment. Only through collaboration, fruitful dialogue, and building upon existing activities can faith action in this field be most impactful.

Recognising the importance of innovation for the environment, the theme of the previous 4th United Nations Environment Assembly's (UNEA) was "innovative solutions for environmental challenges and sustainable consumption and production". Faith actors actively engaged in this process and an overview of their contributions can be found in this [synthesis report](#).

UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative seeks to continue the momentum built up during UNEA 4 by ensuring that discussions in this field are ongoing during next year's UNEA 5.2 discussions, the theme of which is "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals". Therefore, the Faith for Earth Initiative, with its valuable partners, will be convening a discussion focussed specifically on showcasing examples of environmental innovation.

Purpose of Session

The purpose of this session is envisioned to be a combination of:



- a) showcasing innovative approaches to addressing environmental challenges being implemented by faith organisations/affiliated individuals
- b) highlighting other pioneering initiatives that faith actors can contribute towards or link up with, even if these are run by secular actors

Naturally, the discussion and examples showcased should be in line with the theme of UNEA 5.2, with a focusing on leveraging the particular qualities of faith actors to ensure the best comparative advantages. These include their scope and outreach, their ability to mobilise people, the wealth and assets they own, and the influence they have in all areas of life for adherents.

The good news is there is an abundance of work being done in this field, implemented by all different types of stakeholders and we welcome all contributions to discussions, whether coming from a faith background or not. Building synergies and bridging faith/secular divides is a key component of the Faith for Earth Initiative.

Given the broad scope of the topic and the variety of innovations underway, we welcome any inputs into how the discussion should be conducted.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Religion-Science Consortium

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Friday, 25 February 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00) / 8:00-9:30am ET / 14:00-15:30 CET

Background

Linking religious and traditional knowledge with scientific research and findings about environmental issues can offer an innovative approach to strengthen the relationship between environmental stewardship and duty of care as well as to foster ethical behavior and sustainable citizenship. Some faith-based organizations, especially on the local level and in countries of the global south, do not have easy access to global knowledge and scientific evidence related to environmental challenges, we recognize that more accessible scientific knowledge is needed to promote synergies between religion and science, as well as to create new collaboration opportunities.

The Consortium should be focusing on engaging with both the natural sciences and the human sciences for a truly interdisciplinary approach to addressing environmental challenges. The natural sciences provide the essential evidence of the influence of human activities on the environment (such as GHG emissions), whilst the social sciences are better equipped to explore these interactions, understanding the factors that dictate humanity's relationship with the environment and how to help drive some of the necessary behavioral changes to ensure a sustainable future.

The Consortium will promote a holistic approach to tackling environmental challenges that pays attention to incorporating the role of faith actors in these processes.

The Religion-Science Consortium

The [Faith for Nature Conference](#) held in October 2020 has resulted in "[Our Sacred Commitment](#)" that called for the establishment of the Faith for Earth Coalition at UNEP. As one of the four Coalition Councils established under the Faith for Earth Coalition, the Religion-Science Consortium will be composed of theologians, scientists, and environmentalists to bridge the gap between environmental science and religions. Experts from the social sciences will also be included, as these disciplines are particularly well equipped to understand the factors that can help drive the necessary behavioral changes towards the environment and the role of religion in these processes.

This Consortium will help provide the natural and social scientific evidence connected to faith teachings on caring for the natural resources. We hope the Religion-Science Consortium will contribute to translating scientific findings around nature and sustainable living into contemporary language that is understandable and actionable by people. The scientific evidence alone can appear abstract or overwhelming, with the Consortium providing a forum to contextualize the challenges so as to appear more relevant and relatable, whilst providing tangible solutions towards addressing them.

Way Forward

Having established the general structure, purposes and expected outcomes of the Religion-Science Consortium, we hope to further explore details regarding its official launch, work plan and strategy. UNEA 5.2 Faith for Earth Dialogue session will be a valuable opportunity to perform the task in consultation with our partners and relevant stakeholders.

Purpose of Session

- Discuss the nexus of religion/faith and science and its definition for the purpose of the Religion-Science Consortium within the Faith for Earth Coalition;
- Identify the work plan and strategy of the Religion-Science Consortium,
- Translate these into achievable targets and goals for faith actors to aspire towards;
- Explore thematic focuses and type of engagement under the Religion-Science Consortium; and
- Propose engagement opportunities, specific activities, and projects to carry out the work of the Religion-Science Consortium.

Topics of Discussion

- Breakout Room 1: Engagement opportunities of the Religion – Science Consortium
- Breakout Room 2: Action-oriented opportunities of the Religion – Science Consortium

Participants will try to answer the following questions: how can this consortium be most effective in pushing its advocacy/action agenda? Are there useful past experiences with similar consortia? What are good examples and practices to follow for Religion-Science interaction? What advice can be given to get the consortium to work in the most effective way? Which persons or organizations should be recommended to be part of the consortium?

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith, Values and Ethics in Environmental Governance

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Friday, 25 February 2022; 5.30pm -7pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

In the face of the overarching environmental challenges of the triple planetary crisis – climate change, ecosystem degradation and pollution – which continues to intensify, it is evident that human activity and behavior towards the environment must change. Belief systems – among which stand culture and religion – hold the potential to influence both individual behaviors, and societal norms and laws. These systems affect human's interaction with, and perception of the environment. This makes them important components and mediums for galvanizing action towards protecting the environment, with the mobilization of belief systems' forming an important backdrop in advancing environmentally conscious agendas.

FBO's Role, Engagement and Achievements

Faith guides personal behavior choices and attitudes, making religion a powerful vehicle for promoting environmental action, and faith actors have great potential to impact, inspire and impel faith-based commitment-towards a sustainable world through rallying declarations. The Catholic [Laudato Si' movement](#) on 'Care for our Common Home' is a great illustration of a movement seeking to capitalize on the behavioral change potential of faith for environmental benefit. The declaration calls for "a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet" and proceeds to root this change in Christian principles by using ideas of the inherent worth of each person, now and in the future, to argue for caring and protecting the environment. Another great example is the [Al Mizan movement](#) 'A Covenant for Earth', which involves diverse Muslim organizations working towards environmental harmony. This movement seeks to contribute to sustainable development knowledge bases from a holistic Islamic perspective, as well as foster religious dialogue on environmental issues, promote scientific exchange, and highlight initiatives that focus on the intersection of faith and the environment.

Based on its central mission to "encourage, empower and engage with FBOs as partners, at all levels, toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda", the Faith for Earth Initiative aims to enhance the fundamental role of faith communities in tackling

environmental challenges. As such, FBOs should be considered as central actors, interlocutors, and contributors (among Major Groups and Stakeholders) to environmental governance, with access to and influence in policymaking forums.

The Faith for Earth Initiative has been leading efforts in promoting interfaith collaboration through a wide range of engagements highlighted in the [2018/19](#) and [2020 Faith for Earth achievement reports](#). Notably, in October 2020, '[Our Sacred Commitment](#)' was adopted, proclaiming FBOs' commitment towards the protection and restoration of nature, and calling for the creation of the Faith for Earth Coalition. Following on from this engagement, 'Our Sacred Commitment Strategic Meeting' was organized in October 2021, which resulted in the preparation of a set of [Recommendations](#) calling for the "adoption of a global resolution, integrating the contributions of faith actors to environmental governance and establishing a global Faith for Earth Coalition within UNEP and providing the needed capacity and financial resources to achieve its goals". The Icelandic government has stated it will rally support for submitting such a resolution at UNEA 6. This gives time to continue to highlight the benefits of institutionalising the role of faith values and ethics in global governance and mobilise additional support. The '[People and Planet: Faith in the 2030 Agenda](#)' is a great example of the efforts to support partnerships towards achieving SDGs relying on and bolstering faith-based and Indigenous knowledge, networks and resources. The comprehensive '[Faith for Earth: A Call for Action](#)' publication and the '[Faith Action on the UN SDGs: Progress and Outlook](#)' report, are both reasserting the importance to support faith-based action and partnerships in achieving the SDGs. Numerous initiatives are taken as illustrative examples of their commitment towards the natural environment and progress in delivering on the SDGs.

Recently, a report on 'The Role of Faith, Values and Ethics in Strengthening Action for Nature and Environmental Governance' was prepared that explores the nexus of environmental policy and belief systems and asserts the imperative of bringing faith actors further into the fold in environmental governance. It acknowledges the engagement of religious organizations and leaders, the essential contribution of Member States required in supporting the role of ethics and spirituality in the face of global environmental change, as well as the great potential of faith leaders, youth movements and scientifically guided institutions in enhancing it. Ultimately, this report seeks to ensure that their invaluable contributions will one day be recognized and institutionalized in a UN resolution.

The Advancement of Interfaith Collaboration on Environment

In June 2020, and as part of the strategy to establish professional relationships with grassroots environmental organizations to get closer to faith communities all around the world, UNEP's India Country Office launched the Faith for Earth Strategy and Action Plan, becoming the first [Faith for Earth National Coordination Hub](#). In 2021, in taking steps to implement the Strategy and Action Plan, the National Coordination Hub in India alongside with the United Religions Initiative (URI) carried out a series of SDG mapping activities with faith actors in India, Lebanon, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Ethiopia. This aims at mobilizing the vast interfaith network of grassroots faith leaders, FBOs, and community members in the listed countries to "respond to the urgent, climate-related concerns at the local, national, and regional level".

In August 2020, UNEP signed a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) with URI, agreeing to collaborate on "leveraging the wisdom, power and influence of faith-based and spiritual communities in mobilizing the citizenry in environmental awareness and action". Among other activities, UNEP and URI mobilized interfaith and faith-based organizations, religious and spiritual leaders for the

implementation of the Faith for Earth and Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, actively engaged followers from various religions in environmental campaigns, and collaborated in promoting the [Green Rule Handbook](#).

On October 2021, the Faith and Science Appeal was signed by almost forty faith leaders gathered at the Vatican, calling on the international community to raise their ambition and step up climate action ahead of COP26. Faith leaders representing the world's main religions, together with scientists, reasserted that spiritual guidance is driving action, multilateralism and interfaith collaboration and is a fruitful avenue towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda.

Towards a Faith for Earth Coalition

The [Faith for Earth Coalition](#) will consist in a global platform facilitating cooperation and collaboration with and among faith leaders and FBOs in finding long-lasting solutions to environmental challenges and achieving the SDGs. Building on the Faith for Earth Strategy and from an overall perspective of the faith and environment nexus, this platform aims at enhancing partnerships at every level “to inspire, empower and strengthen action and behavioral changes towards achieving the SGDs and implementing UNEP’s programme of work”.

The Faith for Earth Coalition as a platform will comprise four Coalition Councils:

1. The Council of Eminent Leaders: Composed of high-level faith leaders representing major world religions in terms of number of adherents.
2. The Youth Council: Composed of young faith leaders and members of youth movements advocating for living in respect and harmony with planet earth.
3. The Network of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of FBOs: Composed of FBOs with a focus on the environment or those working with (local) faith communities responding to the SDGs.
4. The Religion-Science Consortium: Composed of theologians, scientists and environmentalists to bridge the gap between environmental science and religions.

Way Forward

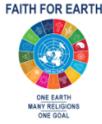
This session will provide a space to discuss the eventual adoption of a Resolution on ‘Faith, Values and Ethics in Environmental Governance’ which aims at integrating and institutionalizing the role of faith actors in environmental governance. This Resolution would recognize among others the role of:

- Eminent religious leaders in paving the way for a more established and unified faith-environment movement
- Youth movements in enhancing capacity-building among youth communities and counting on their immense sway over the future, to be galvanized for environmental action
- The academic and research sector, as well as scientific institutions, in contributing to the advancement of the discourse linking religions and ecology and harnessing faith for environmental action.

Purpose of Session

- Introduce the Report on [‘Faith, Values and Ethics in Environmental Governance’](#)

- Present the efforts, outcomes, and recommendations of 'Our Sacred Commitment Strategic Meeting' ([Skálholt III Conference](#))
- Create a space for dialogue and exchange of views on the role of faith, values and ethics in environmental governance.
- Solicit support and inputs for a new publication on common faith values and ethics relating to the environment
- Discuss a potential global conference on the contribution of faith and values ethics in environmental governance (and regional workshops looking in diverse socio-cultural dimensions at the grassroots and local level)
- Recognize the contribution of Member States and great potential for eminent leaders, youth movements and scientifically guided institutions in catalysing action



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Strengthening Linkages between Faith Communities and Nature-Based Solutions

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday, 28 February 2022; 2pm-3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

We are facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as a result of human activity. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns, lifestyles and behaviors continue to degrade vast areas of the planet and undermine the productivity of ecosystems to a critical point. This is impacting both land and aquatic ecosystems and if left unchecked could result in widespread ecosystem collapse, further exacerbating the socioeconomic and environmental challenges we already face. To tackle this global crisis and transition to a more sustainable future, there is an urgent need to employ innovative approaches. One such approach being Nature-Based Solutions (NbS).

Nature-Based Solutions is an emerging concept for various approaches that are designed to protect the natural environment while addressing societal challenges. These approaches are inspired by and supported to work with nature itself and its immense restorative power. Human wellbeing and biodiversity depend directly on healthy, diverse and resilient ecosystems, with Nature-Based Solutions acting to protect, restore and sustainably manage them and the range of essential services they provide.

NbS refers to all natural environmental and climate solutions that include actions such as better ecosystem management; restoring forests, wetlands, and grasslands; the development of natural infrastructure in areas of human settlement, as well as many others. Many of the activities and approaches that are encompassed by the umbrella term NbS are also associated with other widely used terms specific to particular sectors and disciplines (Ozment et al. 2019). Such terms include green infrastructure, natural infrastructure, ecological engineering, ecosystem-based mitigation, ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR).

A good example of NbS comes from mangroves. Mangroves represent a buffer between land and water and protect local communities from environmental hazards such as storms, sea-level rise,



or coastal erosion, whilst also providing livelihood opportunities and other services such as water resources to the local populations, and they represent an important habitat for many species of marine life.

Nature-Based Solutions are some of the most cost-effective climate solutions, as they prioritise the renewal of natural processes and local resources while decreasing the use of costly external inputs of energy, money, materials, and human resources. They also draw from historical knowledge, techniques, and practices, such as those in indigenous knowledge systems. Most indigenous peoples have long histories of sustainable co-existence with their territories and the natural resources contained within: they are already safeguarding nearly one-fifth of the total carbon sequestered by tropical and subtropical forests and their territories encompass 40% of protected areas globally.

Finally, if adopted on a wide-scale, conservation scientists estimate that Nature-Based Solutions could account for a significant portion of near-term climate change mitigation needs (they have the potential to reduce emissions by more than a third of what is needed by 2030) – presenting a powerful answer to the global environmental crisis. On the other hand, national and international policy and actions are increasingly recognizing that NbS play a vital role in climate change adaptation. NbS for adaptation are often low-cost options that bring environmental, economic and social benefits to a wide range of stakeholders, including women and poor and marginalized groups. NbS for adaptation restore, build on and enhance ecosystem services in order to manage climate change risks and impacts, help people (including women and marginal groups) adapt to climate change, and enhance the climate resilience of communities, assets and society. This is the case of EbA approaches which represent the strategy of using nature and healthy ecosystems to reduce the impacts of climate change on people.

Overall, Nature-Based Solutions should be flexible, locally adapted, systemic, and grounded in the best environmental science and knowledge to ensure they are properly implemented to create the most benefits, for people and planet.

In 2019, a group of Canada’s leading nature and conservation organizations convened the Nature-Based Climate Solutions Summit to “discuss Nature-Based Solutions and map out ways to collectively pursue research, engage the public, and shape public policy”. The goal of the summit was to increase general knowledge of Nature-Based Solutions and help chart a path forward. In the same year, the UN Secretary-general convened the Climate Action Summit, which brought Nature-Based Solutions to global political attention as an important strategy in climate change mitigation and adaptation. A Nature-Based Solutions Coalition, co-led by China and New Zealand, was created to launch the NbS for Climate Manifesto, a plan that seeks to “unlock the full potential of nature for climate action” by massively scaling up land restoration activities worldwide. To help keep this momentum going, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is supporting a wide range of adaptation and restoration initiatives such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030), announced in 2019 and launched in 2021, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Calling for the protection and revival of all ecosystems, from the rainforests and mountains to the coastlines and coral reefs, all around the world. It recognizes that healthy ecosystems are fundamental in enhancing people’s livelihoods, counteracting climate change, and halting the collapse of biodiversity. Indeed, restoring ecosystems is fundamental to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and underlines those on climate change, poverty eradication, food security, water and biodiversity conservation. UNEP is also assisting countries define, implement, and monitor their national biodiversity action plans and



ecosystem-based climate change adaptation plans, drawing on Nature-Based Solutions in the process.

However, despite the growing interest from governments, businesses and financial institutions, there is typically poor knowledge and understanding as to how much capital is already directed to assets and activities that can be considered Nature-Based Solutions (NbS), how much capital ought to be directed to NbS and what are the clear investment opportunities. Looking to the future, investment in NbS ought to at least triple in real terms by 2030 and increase four-fold by 2050 if the world is to meet its climate change, biodiversity and land degradation targets. And with the funding for NbS making up for only a tiny fraction of total adaptation and conservation finance, it is crucial to better include adaptation in the overall NbS budget and find new funding avenues for adaptation.

This is why UNEP is also co-implementing with IUCN a new Global EbA Fund, which supports innovative approaches to Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) to climate change. The Fund supports catalytic initiatives to help overcome identified barriers to upscaling EbA. The Fund prioritizes filling in planning, knowledge, and resourcing gaps with a broad thematic focus on innovation and urgency, and encourages creative solutions and partnerships. By supporting catalytic interventions, the Fund addresses research gaps, pilots innovative EbA approaches, engages in strategic EbA policy mainstreaming, and incentivises innovative finance mechanisms and private sector EbA investment.

FBO's Role, Engagement and Achievements

To tackle the triple planetary crisis, it is crucial to engage the full spectrum of society in all countries. Roughly 85% of the global population is affiliated with a religion or faith, with spiritual beliefs and values influencing people's behaviour, worldviews, and decisions. When tapped into to promote environmental action, this gives Faith-Based Organisations and communities enormous social and political influence in encouraging actions to restore ecosystems and prevent further destruction, in alignment with religious teachings. Further, 5% of commercial forests and 10% of habitable lands are under the control of Faith-Based Organizations. With access to localities and rural areas - where information about NbS and funding opportunities are lacking - they can help increase rural livelihoods by promoting the restoration and conservation of local ecosystems. They thus are indispensable allies in the implementation of Nature-Based Solutions, given the extensive land and resources under their control, the educational and social leverage they have and their ability to inspire and mobilise millions.

Indeed, Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are increasingly committed to protecting and restoring endangered natural spaces throughout the world. One example is the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI), founded to nurture a worldwide movement for the protection of tropical forests that is grounded in the values, ethics and moral guidance of faith communities. Another example is the Faith for Nature conference, organized in 2020 by the President, Prime-Minister, and Minister of Environment of Iceland in collaboration with UNEP's Executive Director and a wide number of partners. The high-level Global Conference laid the foundations for greater inter-faith collaboration for sustainable and regenerative development to achieve the SDGs and placed a particular importance on Nature-based solutions, in line with the theme UNEA 5. The Vatican Botanical Garden, in partnership with UNEP's One Trillion Tree Movement also launched Living Chapel in 2020, a global interfaith movement for creating Living Sacred Spaces. It aims to catalyse faith communities' commitment towards tackling climate change and ecosystem destruction



through sustainable energy practices and building and renovating houses of worship to be more energy efficient. Finally, the employment and promotion of Nature-Based Solutions form an important part of UNEP's Faith for Earth Initiative's Ecosystem Restoration Strategy throughout the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

NbS are key to addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis and advancing climate adaptation. But even if there is more and more attention brought to restoration in international environmental forums, these approaches remain largely unfunded. For example, only 1.5% of all public international climate finance has gone to support NbS for adaptation in developing countries. With the importance that NbS represent to tackle current challenges and the barriers they face, tapping into the wealth, influence and knowledge of FBOs, faith leaders and faith communities is crucial for the way forward.

Way Forward

Developing ecosystems restoration programs: Ecosystem restoration, which refers to the recovery of ecosystems that have been degraded or destroyed as well as the conservation of the ones that are still intact, could remove 13 to 26 gigatons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. It yields enormous benefits, for the environment and for the communities who depend on local resources for their livelihoods. Through agroforestry, reforestation and afforestation programmes, ecosystem restoration reduces land degradation while soaking up carbon. The Ecosystem Restoration Playbook provides a concise overview of the matter.

Expanding the use of agro-ecological farming practices: agro-ecological farming practices can change social relations, empower farmers and allow them to adapt to climate change, by sustainably using and conserving natural resources and biodiversity. It is also critical to uplift indigenous practices and knowledge, as indigenous territories are critical habitats for biodiversity and ecosystem restoration and are key to mitigating the effects of climate change, acting as carbon sinks. Ultimately, there are underlying moral and environmental imperatives to address the manner in which food is produced and consumed.

Capacity building: Given the influence of faith actors worldwide, it is crucial that FBOs are empowered to inspire their followers to effectively engage in Nature-Based Solutions. This requires partnering with diverse stakeholders, including governments, scientific and research institutes, companies, and civil society organisations, to draw upon the qualities of each and expand the reach and effectiveness of Nature-Based Solutions. Equally it also involves ensuring FBOs are contributing to existing NBS initiatives, as well as implementing their own. It is crucial that well-meaning actions are translated into effective, evidence-driven solutions to have the impact that is so urgently needed.

Purpose of Session

The goal of the session is to explore the intersection of faith actors and Nature-Based Solutions (NbS). Its main purpose is to discuss how faith actors can be galvanized to further promote and implement such initiatives by addressing their benefits as well as major challenges in accessing knowledge, expertise and funding opportunities.

Showcasing successful stories from the field, the session will focus on the perspective and role of faith actors by looking at case studies and best practices that could be replicable - including



Indigenous knowledge, adaptation measures, partnerships/coalition building and ecosystem restoration.

Topics of Discussion

- The role of faith actors in developing Nature-Based Solutions
- Informing FBOs on ecosystem restoration, NbS and adaptation
- Presenting the numerous benefits that NbS represent for FBOs and religious communities (mitigation / adaptation)
- What are the main barriers to restoration and NbS, and how can FBOs help overcome these barriers?
- Leveraging influence of FBOS for Nature-based Solutions and contributing to Faith for Earth's Ecosystem Restoration Strategy
- Looking at case studies and best practices that could be replicable, paying attention to Indigenous knowledge
- Exploring effective partnership development and coalition building for NbS such as done by IRI – looking at awareness raising, influencing policy and mobilizing action – seeing if comparable approaches would be effective in countries outside of IRI's mandate
- Mobilising faith assets and wealth for investment into NbS
- Promoting interfaith cooperation in the implementation of NbS
- How FBO's access to finance to implement NbS could be strengthened (example of GEBAF)
- FBOs role in integrating traditional knowledge with scientific evidence to strengthen the uptake of NbS/EbA.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

What the World Expects from FBOs and What We Should Do

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Monday, 28 February 2022; 4pm -5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Well organized and mobilized, the religious sector could become one of the most effective forces to address the climate and environmental crises. Over the past thirty years, researchers, environmentalists, and business and political leaders have come to understand the uniquely valuable role of religion in relation to climate change and environmental conservation. A core of global religious environmental organizations, select high-level religious leaders, and many religious communities, have begun to harness the religious sector's enormous size and remarkable capacity to reach grassroots and marginalized communities worldwide. These same groups have considerable power to address the climate and environmental crises in the coming years with an unwavering commitment to equity and social justice.

Research shows that nearly 85% of people worldwide identify with a religion. Religious institutions have aggregate membership in the billions; massive land holdings and countless facilities; enormous educational and health care systems; have substantial wealth and assets and have global media channels. Religion helps shape human values at the individual and collective levels and is a fundamental part of people's lives. Most of all, religious traditions and religious leaders speak with moral authority and have a history, physical presence, and pervasive infrastructure unmatched by any other entity, including governments. And every religious tradition in the world has, in its own language, strong commitments about treating both people and the planet in a way that is at once reverent, compassionate and sustainable. Research shows that religious ethics, including environmentally centered ones, can be a key motivator for behavioural change.

At the same time, religious traditions have faced their own challenges, and with respect to the environment they are still punching far below their true weight. As a result, religious-environmental work to date, while it has developed effective means for impact, has only scratched the surface of what is possible. Here we are encouraged to understand what religious communities globally

have done on other fronts in recent years when their resources and foci have been aligned in shared purpose.

Way Forward

There is enormous leverage in the religious sector that needs to be actualized by helping focus and by supporting the powerful contributions of religious institutions and communities to address the climate crisis as a matter of the greatest urgency. These same religious communities can advance on-the-ground collaborations with the poorest and most marginalized communities to advance climate justice.

Participants Agenda

This session will include the following organizations engaging in a dialogue to answer two important questions:

1. What does the world expect from FBOs?
2. What FBOs expect from other stakeholders?

Moderator

Susanne Hendershot

Panelists

Martin Palmer
Fletcher Harper
Yonatan Neril
Chantal Elkin
Jakir Manela

FaithInvest works with a globally diverse community of religious partners in their role as owners of assets including land, buildings, schools, medical facilities, and financial investments. FaithInvest helps these groups to be faith-consistent in terms of the use of these assets, based on their teachings about environmental and sustainable issues in the framework of social justice and equality.



GreenFaith, an international, multi-faith climate and environmental justice organization, is building a global, grassroots multi-faith activist alliance that campaigns for an end to new fossil fuel infrastructure and deforestation and related financing, for green jobs to reduce pollution and lift millions of people from poverty, and to protect Indigenous rights. GreenFaith's new International Network has partners in over 20 countries.



Hazon is the umbrella organization for the Jewish environmental movement, deeply weaving sustainability into the fabric of Jewish life in order to create a healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable world for all. Through immersive experiences, transformative Jewish environmental education, and climate action at scale, Hazon is sparking culture change and systemic change across North American Jewish communities and throughout the Jewish diaspora



and beyond.

The Interfaith Center for Sustainable Development (ICSD) connects religion and ecology and galvanizes faith communities' action and teaching on environmental sustainability. ICSD engages clergy and seminaries, promotes solar energy on church lands, and exercises thought leadership through a leading blog, YouTube channel, and social media engagement. Its recent book *Eco Bible* has been a #1 bestseller on several Amazon Kindle categories.



Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) was founded in 2000 as a religious response to climate change in the United States. IPL works with affiliates in 40 states, 22,000 congregations and more than six million people of every faith and spiritual tradition to advocate for policy change at all levels of government, galvanize community action, and change the public narrative on a just and equitable response to climate change.



WWF UK's Beliefs and Values Programme (BVP) is the leading programme within the WWF international network (being the network of offices affiliated to WWF-World Wide Fund for Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund, a Swiss foundation) that has a mandate to enhance and support faith-based conservation initiatives.



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Local Challenges, Local Solutions: Faith Groups for Environmental Action

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Tuesday, 1 March 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) are an important, necessary, and a highly influential group of stakeholders in attaining the SDGs and taking environmental action:

- FBOs provide immediate support and care to people on the ground and are closely connected to the communities they are situated in.
- Faith leaders have widespread influence and trust among their communities, and through the lens of faith can inspire urgent environmental action from local to global levels.
- FBOs can influence or facilitate widespread local participation and mass mobilisation for broad behaviour change and cultural shifts, leveraging actions, ideas, and inspiration to ensure a sustainable future.

Given the size of their influence, and the significance of their wisdom and experience, FBOs are key stakeholders in helping to ensure a livable planet for all. To realise their full potential, it is essential to engage and support faith actors through capacity-building activities, which includes education, grassroots coordination and support for taking plans to scale, locally, regionally, nationally and globally.

To build close bonds with faith communities worldwide, Faith for Earth has been working on establishing professional relationships with grassroots environmental organisations around the world. The Faith for Earth [Strategy](#) involves inspiring and empowering faith-based leaders and organisations for a sustainable impact.

Global Coordination - Working Together

In January 2021, Faith for Earth and [the United Religions Initiative](#) (URI) which has a global network in 109 countries and 16 regional offices launched a 4-country programme in India, Lebanon, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Ethiopia to support and equip Faith Leaders and community members with the forum and knowledge resources for meaningful, effective and well-coordinated action.

The [Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs](#) seek to identify and mobilise the vast faith and interfaith network of grassroots FBOs, leaders, and community members.

Later that year in October 2021, FaithInvest and WWF's Beliefs and Values Programme launched the [Faith Long-Term Plans Programme](#). The Programme acts as a catalyst to create new impetus and purpose within the biggest organised sector of civil society in the world – the faiths – to help them channel their assets, investments, wisdom and influence to drive practical action to benefit people and the planet. The programme provides an opportunity for faith groups, through the creation of faith plans, to use a planning methodology to identify where long-term action can be taken across many aspects of faith community life. The programme seeks to create and strengthen new and existing pathways between faith groups and partner organisations to help raise awareness, mobilise at the grassroots level, and build capacity to enable faith groups to take action at the local level.

The shared goals include:

- Mutual collaboration on a national level to support Faith Leaders and FBOs in identifying and addressing environmental priorities;
- Emphasising the importance of incorporating values-based lens into the conversations about, and the responses towards, global and local environmental challenges;
- Celebrating and spreading knowledge about the inherent relationship between faith, religion and the environment (creation);
- Taking action on a local level and, where possible, leveraging on each other's networks to scale up efforts at a national and regional level;
- Encouraging an integral approach to the use of faith-based assets, wisdom, influence, and lifestyles to drive long-term practical action for the benefit of people and planet;
- Sending a powerful and unified message about the commitment and action of the largest civil society organisation (Faith groups) to world leaders and key stakeholder groups.

Expanding Hub Vision, Ensuring Success

Faith for Earth would like to take this opportunity during the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2 to convene a session discussing 'Local Challenges, Local Solutions: Faith Groups for Environmental Action' aiming for:

Capacity-building by supporting partner FBOs, providing scientifically-grounded information about environmental issues and potential solutions that leverage the impact of faith actors through workshops, webinars, and educational activities at a local and national level.

Incorporating local-specific needs Many countries around the world face comparable environmental issues, but solutions will need to be tailored to local contexts. This can be done through research activities, for example through interviews with leaders from different faiths and

sectors of society, followed by surveys to reach out to a wider set of people, including local academic institutions and researchers.

Continuing working with grassroots environmental organisations by reaching out to people with existing connections, researching relevant environmental organisations online, and spreading awareness about the National Coordination Hubs and Faith Plans Programme in respective countries through social media, news, and other platforms. Here established faith networks should be mobilised.

Increase interfaith youth-engagement This can be achieved through working with youth-based organisations, local schools, and through sporting activities.

Spread awareness, Increase engagement Assigning ambassadors and champions for the respective National Coordination Hubs i.e. the Faith for Earth Councillors in India is one means of doing so.

Make action plans and their goals self-sustainable and continual Assigning champions that continue the work, encouraging self-starting initiatives leveraging on local capacities, need and opportunities, growing a network of like-minded faith leaders and champions to facilitate peer-to-peer learning.

Purpose of Session

- Enable and foster global coordination between faith-based stakeholders and secular groups including civil society organisations through the mutual collaboration of UNEP Faith for Earth and the Faith Plans Long-term Programme.
- Provide a platform to amplify the voice, role & experience of FBOs as key stakeholders in driving the SDG agenda
- Incorporate a values-based lens into the conversations about, and the responses towards global and local environmental challenges
- Raise awareness/raise the profile of partnerships and existing programmes within faith-based organisations
- Solicit other national interest in expanding the Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs and the Faith Plans Programme.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Religions in Action for the Protection and Restoration of Forests: Lessons from the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative in Brazil, Colombia, DRC and Peru

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Tuesday, 1 March 2022; 5.30pm-7pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Rainforests play a crucial role in sustaining all life on Earth. They are home to vast biodiversity, and provide millions of people with food, shelter, livelihoods, medicine, and clean water. They are also sites of unique cultures and traditions that are intimately tied to the natural world. Rainforests serve as huge carbon sinks and preventing their destruction is amongst the best climate mitigation solutions we have. They provide an indispensable contribution to sustainable development and must be protected and restored for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Even given their global profile and importance, with both humans and nature directly depending on them, rainforest deforestation continues to accelerate rapidly. Driven by extractive industries and land conversion for agricultural products like beef, soy, palm oil, and pulp and paper, an area the size of the United Kingdom, France and Germany combined has been lost forever. The altered landscapes provide very few of the ecosystem services that rainforests do and serve as a testament to humanity's strained relationship with nature.

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative

The Interfaith Rainforest Initiative (IRI) is an international multi-faith alliance that works to bring moral urgency and faith-based leadership to global efforts to end tropical deforestation. The initiative mobilises the commitment, influence, and moral authority of religious actors to advocate for protection of the world's rainforests and the indigenous peoples who serve as their guardians. IRI works globally and in five countries: Brazil, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, and Peru.

By serving as a platform for religious leaders and faith-based communities to work hand-in-hand with indigenous peoples, governments, civil society and businesses on actions that protect rainforests and forest communities, IRI is guided by several strategies:

- Mobilize high-level religious leaders | Mobilize leaders from all religions, faiths, and spiritual traditions to make the ethical case for protecting rainforests, securing the rights of Indigenous peoples, and ending tropical deforestation as an indispensable part of global efforts to address climate change.
- Develop and incubate faith-based networks for forests | Mobilize faith-based networks in major rainforest countries, building up from the grassroots and equipping religious leaders with the resources, data, and cross-sector partnerships that they need to undertake effective advocacy, public engagement, and on- the-ground action to protect rainforests.
- Build multi-stakeholder coalitions | Create a platform for exchange, learning, and collaboration between religious leaders, Indigenous peoples, governments, the science and research communities, NGOs, and businesses, effectively building a stronger, more potent coalition of partners working towards the shared goal of protecting rainforests, strengthening land rights, and achieving climate justice.
- Exert moral influence | Create a values-based platform for political advocacy, bringing the ethical and spiritual case for protecting rainforests to policymakers at local, national, regional, and international levels and leveraging the networks and institutional presence of the world's religions to advocate for the enforcement of laws and policies that protect, restore, and sustainably manage forests.
- Build faith-based leadership capacity | Build the capacity of religious leaders at all scales to become public advocates for the protection of rainforests, offering training on rainforest issues, community organizing, and campaign coordination and providing them with the resources they will need to engage in advocacy, action, and partnerships to halt deforestation.
- Engage faith communities through social mobilization | Use strategic communications plans that combine scientific data, traditional ecological knowledge, faith messages, and social marketing tools to tell the story of tropical deforestation, the moral imperative of taking action to end it, and the entry points for leadership, engagement, and action by faith-based communities.
- Bridge the knowledge gap between the science and faith communities | Work to equip religious and faith-based communities with the scientific data, research, and advocacy materials they need to engage substantively with the issues underpinning tropical deforestation, serving a “translation” function between the science and religious communities.

Achievements

At the global level, IRI has succeeded in establishing a global platform for interfaith action and elevating it to prominence internationally. After the initiative's launch in 2017, a first-of-its-kind summit in which Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, and Taoist religious leaders joined forces with Indigenous peoples from Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Meso-America, and Peru, jointly committing to make the protection of rainforests an ethical priority for the world's faith communities. In 2019, over 900 of the world's most senior

religious leaders from 125 countries joined together to endorse the Faiths for Forests Declaration and Action Agenda, stating that the protection of tropical forests and Indigenous peoples' rights is a moral responsibility, is essential to global climate change efforts, and requires the mobilizing power, influence, and reach of the world's religious leaders and faith communities. As part of their endorsement of the Declaration, religious leaders agreed to work together through IRI to achieve the Declaration's goals.

At the national level, IRI has launched country programs in Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, and Peru – nations that collectively contain 70% of the world's remaining tropical forests. Country programs work on network building to establish action coalitions in areas where rainforests face the greatest threat, public outreach and awareness-raising on key rainforest issues – including workshops for religious leaders and faith communities. The programs also work to influence forest and Indigenous policies at local, subnational, and national levels and advocate towards companies invested in deforestation. Through its country programs, IRI has trained thousands of religious leaders to become rainforest advocates, and more than 50 local chapters have been launched in regions where deforestation threats are highest.

Way Forward

With the achievements and groundwork in Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia and Peru, knowledge sharing between the national IRI country programs will ensure that best practices and lessons learned are shared effectively. This will be done through online workshops where participants from the IRI country programs work together to find possible solutions and improvements to their respective programs, building on the same common goal despite different contexts.

IRI can continue to expand its impact by focusing on three key areas:

Raising awareness of the tropical deforestation crisis and equipping religious leaders with the science, information and tools needed to serve as effective advocates for rainforest protection. Ongoing investment in capacity building will be essential.

Mobilizing faith-based action by connecting religious leaders with allies from across sectors to multiply their collective impact. Creating linkages with ongoing efforts by the broader coalition of partners working to protect forests is a critical key to long-term success of the program.

Advocating for policies that protect forests by encouraging governments and companies to adopt, fulfill and expand upon their commitments to protect rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples. The program demonstrates how religious leaders can effectively mobilize to influence laws, policies, and legislation in major rainforest countries, which is the most critical element behind the IRI theory of change.

Purpose of Session

- Reflect on achievements and lessons learned IRI in Phase 1
- Look ahead to the potential impact of IRI in Phase 2
- Hear from the National Facilitators of IRI country programs on what has worked, what hasn't and plans for the next year and Phase 2

- Consider lessons learned for the Faith for Earth program, and the possible transfer of best practices to other member nations
- Discuss how to engage youth more effectively in IRI Phase 2

Topics of Discussion

- Achievements and lessons learned from IRI country programs in Brazil, Colombia, DRC, Indonesia and Peru
- Reflection on how IRI has achieved cooperation and shared purpose between religious leaders and indigenous peoples
- Sharing IRI educational materials (faith toolkits, issue primers, country fact sheets, resource guides and animations) with religious networks around the world
- Harnessing collaboration between Faith for Earth and IRI
- Increasing youth participation in rainforest protection.
- Interfaith rainforest protection collaboration across national borders



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United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Mindfulness, Faith and Sustainability

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Wednesday, 2 March 2022; 10:00am-10:30am East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Exacerbating climate change, widespread natural degradation, rapid biodiversity loss, and vastly increasing pollution and waste pose severe threats to planet Earth and human well-being and prosperity. Current development models and socioeconomic systems are fuelling this triple planetary crisis, making the need to embrace sustainable development and lifestyles more pressing than ever.

An essential key to solving the triple planetary crisis, and a priority area for reaching Agenda 2030, is focusing on responsible consumption, as manifested in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. To reach SDG 12, especially its target of responsible and sustainable consumption habits, people must have a holistic perspective that takes a bottom-up approach and addresses the root causes of overconsumption. For this to happen, individuals' behaviours, values, habits, and routines should be addressed accordingly. Whilst addressing major environmental challenges is certainly not the responsibility of individuals alone and should merge top-down and bottom-up approaches, people could still make efforts to play their part. One such avenue to approach this, and the focus of this dialogue session, is through mindfulness.

Mindfulness, Sustainability and Faith

Mindfulness is generally defined as a practice to repeatedly bring one's attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgement. Mindfulness practice has been recognized as a way for people to increase their sense of composure, well-being and quality of life, with resilience and happiness. Regular mindfulness practice enables individuals to observe their thoughts and personal habits, manage emotions, build empathy with sensitivity, and cultivate values based on ethical principles. Eventually, the latter could enable a mindfulness practitioner to understand the



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gravity of the triple planetary crises and the importance of protecting the environment. More significantly, through the practice of mindfulness and re-connecting with Mother Earth, mindfulness can help the practitioner manage their own desires and habits in relation to consumption. Addressing the triple planetary crisis is directly linked to individual consumption habits, moderation in behaviour, and sensitivity to the environment. Discussions on the potential of mindfulness to address the growing environmental and climate crises are just beginning, and seems to be gaining traction.

With the triple planetary crisis exacerbating rapidly, our societies around the world need to re-think how we behave towards the environment. We cannot rely on technological innovation or technocratic solutions alone. Rather, to solve the root-causes of our environmental issues, individuals' values, ethics, and inner beliefs must also be addressed. Mindfulness has promising potential to induce behavioural and value changes in a pro-environmental manner. It builds on faith, prayer, spirituality and wholesome lifestyles, all of which will prevent and mitigate planetary crises rather than exacerbate them.

Mindfulness is a mind-training, with powerful potential for transforming individuals. Regular mindfulness practice has the ability to tap into individuals' core values and ethical principles and is known to facilitate positive thought-waves and generate energies impacting the practitioner's surroundings, near and far. Coupled with spirituality and prayer, mindfulness can alter downstream behaviours, negative attitudes and toxic mind-states. Instead, these practices can build uplifting and positive attitudes, imbued with kindness and compassion.

Anxiety, fear and a sense of hopelessness when facing the triple planetary crisis are natural. Mindfulness can address these tendencies and help overcome the emotional paralysis that many people experience in the face of such immense and complex challenges. Indeed, if the power of mindfulness is known and experientially understood, much of such despondent mind-states can be overcome.

Although many mindfulness interventions and practices are secularised, these have been derived and influenced largely by Eastern spiritual traditions, especially Buddhism. Indeed, mindfulness is a core teaching of the Buddha since the 5th Century BC. Many Faiths and Religions use mindfulness practices and mindfulness-based interventions. These include different types of prayer and religious practices that focus on increasing awareness, openness with acceptance, non-judgment, and ethical behaviour. Furthermore, mindfulness-based interventions connected to wisdom traditions and nature have been shown to offer a framework for re-building the connection with Mother Earth. This act of spiritual re-connection with nature is possible by investigating life's 'interdependence' and invoking positive mind qualities such as 'sacredness' towards our Mother Earth. These interventions serve as a way of encouraging mindfulness amongst large parts of the world's population that identify with a vast range of Faiths and Religions. All these mindfulness-based practices of many faiths collectively could prove to be a powerful 'voice' of non-strident activism through 'silent sermons'.

Purpose of the Session



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The purpose of this session is to provide a space to discuss the interlinkages between how mindfulness can induce individuals and communities to adopt sustainable behaviours, specifically, working towards SDG 12.

This session will also focus on how ideas of mindfulness are already present in many different faiths, and how focusing on meditation, collective prayer, and other mindfulness practices can help address the triple planetary crisis.

Topics of Discussions

- The role of mindfulness in adopting more sustainable consumption habits (SDG 12)
- Different Faiths and Religions mindfulness practices
- Re-connecting with nature through mindfulness, meditation, and spirituality

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

The Power of Faith Partnerships to Safeguard Nature: PaRD a Case in Point

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Wednesday, 2 March 2022; 2pm-3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

One of Faith for Earth's core [goals](#) is to "Strengthen Partnership with Faith-Based Organisations' Leadership for Policy Impact". This can be achieved by empowering Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) to enhance their participation in policy debates and decision-making. To this end, Faith for Earth has participated in numerous workshops, conferences, and forums since 2018, facilitating policy dialogue by bringing together policymakers, scientists, government officials, and religious representatives to discuss relevant environmental issues.

PaRD WE CARE

The [International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development](#) (PaRD), established in 2016, brings together partners from all over the world in order to harness the positive impact of religion and values in sustainable development and humanitarian assistance. Membership in PaRD is voluntary and currently comprises of 135 organisations bringing diverse perspectives and expertise.

[Membership](#) is open to all governmental and intergovernmental entities, civil society and non-governmental organisations such as religious and value-driven organisations, secular NGOs, community initiatives, foundations, academic institutions and other relevant development organisations.

PaRD aims to provide a neutral space for all its members to discuss development goals, review evidence-based research, share best practices, and develop independent policy recommendations, with the aim of fostering partnership between government and faith-based organizations, while respecting the unique identity and positions of all members. The work of

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2: The Power of Faith Partnerships to Safeguard Nature: PaRD a Case

PaRD is divided into work-streams: Health, Gender Equality and Empowerment, Sustaining Peace, and Water, Environment and Climate Action (WECARE). The latter, WECARE, focuses on Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action, Life Below Water and Life on Land (SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15). Faith for Earth a former co-chair of WECARE, along with the World Evangelical Alliance, Global One 2015, Tearfund, and the World Council of Churches.

The purpose of the WECARE work-stream is to:

1. Foster collaboration between PaRD members around SDGs 6, 13, 14, and 15. Have a look at the [Resource Catalogue](#).
2. Enable sharing of knowledge, learning and best practice among members and beyond, in order to facilitate learning and uptake of effective inclusive and faith-based approaches for tackling environment and water related issues.
3. Promote and advocate for the role of faith actors and inclusive and faith-based approaches to addressing environment, water and climate action related challenges, in order for the breadth of knowledge and best practices.

In collaboration with Humboldt University Berlin (HU), WECARE co-hosted a [Capacity Building Workshop on the topic Religious Communities and Ecological Sustainability in Southern Africa](#) during the 2020 PaRD Virtual Annual Forum. This virtual workshop focused on climate change, sustainable agriculture, eco-feminism, eco-theology, and local multi-faith action by sharing insights into ecological sustainability from theological perspectives and highlighting the value of engagement with religious leaders and faith-based organizations. It was also an important opportunity to discuss faith-environment linkages through a gendered lens and the essential, but frequently undervalued contribution of women in this field. Building on the findings of the event, the HU will develop a comprehensive report, including research findings as well as policy recommendations, which will be presented to the [Annual Forum 2021](#) in South Africa this November.

Way Forward

PaRD WECARE is currently conducting a mapping exercise to identify and raise awareness of the work of faith-based, religious and civil society organisations working on the environment. Working on behalf of PaRD, the research is being conducted by the [Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities \(JLI\)](#). This activity will enable the formation of a centralised online database which will help raise awareness of faith-based environmental projects underway and increase the visibility of the mapped organisations, and hopefully will also lead to opportunities for mutual learning and networking between organisations. Moreover, decisive steps to advance FBOs' policy engagement are currently underway. In collaboration with the Government of Iceland and other stakeholders, Faith for Earth is pushing for the [adoption of a global resolution](#), integrating the contributions of faith actors in environmental governance, as well the creation a global Faith for Earth Coalition within UNEP.

The [Faith for Earth Coalition](#) will be a self-sustaining global platform to strengthen cooperation with and among faith actors locally, regionally, and globally by facilitating policy dialogue and



public engagement on environmental issues. When finalised, these landmark initiatives will help institutionalise the participation of FBOs in policymaking at all levels.

The Faith for Earth Dialogue consists of 25+ session co-designed by leading faith-based organisations. [Register](#) for the session on Faith, Values and Ethics and their role in advancing environmental governance on 25 February 2022; 5.30pm-7pm East African Time (GMT+03:00).

Purpose of Session:

- Policy Engagement

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith and Food: Nature Positive Solutions for a Flourishing World

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Wednesday, 2 March 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which address the global challenges the world faces today, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice, comprise a large number of interconnected targets related to agriculture and food. SDG 2 explicitly relates to food systems as it aims to “[end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.](#)” Other SDGs, such as SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 14 (Life below Water), and SDG 15 (Life on Land) also indirectly contribute to the betterment of our agricultural land use, production and consumption practices.

Food is not only a building block of life, but also a fundamental human right recognized by international human rights [law](#). Since the beginning of time, food has served as a medium to exchange culture and history, connect to nature and the rest of the world, and express gratitude. As put by the Faith and Food Coalition, “[our story of food is one of sacred joy. Interconnectivity. Dignity. Empathy](#)”.

These are universal values that are treasured by faith, spiritual, indigenous, as well as non-faith communities and their communities, as “[to eat food \[...\] is to experience our interdependence with nature, fully embracing the land we live on and those who have nurtured the food that is provided for us to eat.](#)”

However, while globalization has allowed us to steadily increase our global food production to feed an ever-growing population, the quest for growth and profit, as per the current economic paradigm, based on industrial food systems is pillaging our Earth’s natural resources and destroying its functioning ecosystems. Indeed, “[Industrial agriculture has destroyed up to 75 percent of the world’s agro-biodiversity, uses up to 80 percent of the planet’s freshwater, and produces up to 20 percent of the world’s greenhouse gases.](#)”

Today, humanity finds itself in a crisis of waste and destruction. Its capitalist food system keeps labor and all other production costs to a minimum while providing excessive quantities of cheap food, thus directly contributing to environmental destruction, biodiversity loss, pollution, species extinction, climate change, and food insecurity. The COVID-19 crisis has directly exposed the flaws of our global food systems, ranging “[from unequal food distribution to workers in the system going hungry](#),” and yearly food waste and loss reaching [1.3 billion tonnes](#). The pandemic has also massively set back the fight against world hunger and malnutrition. Thus, it is expected that by 2030, over [800 million people worldwide](#) could go hungry unless drastic and immediate actions are taken.

The 2021 IPCC 6th assessment report has made it clearer than ever that to create a viable, equitable, thriving, and sustainable future for all, humanity must come together to mend its relationship with Earth and its ecological boundaries to create resilient and ethical food systems! Faith and Food. However, achieving these goals requires a global, international plan of action that unites every country, community and individual that lives on the planet. Given more than 80% of the world's inhabitants have spiritual values that guide their behaviour, there is an urgent need to reach out to people that are motivated by religious beliefs to promote environmental change. Indeed, food is an important part of numerous spiritual or religious ceremonies and rituals. Moreover, all religious traditions refer to food production and the sacredness of food. In that way, places of worship, Faith-based organizations and networks are ideal environments to discuss food consumption and address the transformation of habits towards more sustainable lifestyles. [What we eat, as well as how food is produced](#) and consumed is full of meaning and has a direct link to the value we cherish and what we believe in.

The environmental cost of food is an issue of global scale that cannot be compartmentalized: food production and consumption are part of a larger “[chain of interdependencies](#),” from the field to the plate, impacting small farmers, indigenous communities, women’s rights, economy, and health, among others. Consequently, religion can be a source of guidance for healthier nutritional eating habits and can foster better and more efficient food production and consumption at the local, national, or global level.

How Can Faith Actors Contribute to More Sustainable Food Systems?

Firstly, making global food systems more sustainable can be achieved through diverse advocacy efforts. Awareness can be raised on several fronts, notably through education and research. The increase of education programs and research about sustainable and traditional agriculture would contribute to the creation of more responsible, sustainable, justice-oriented, and resilient food systems.

Influencing public policy changes and the strengthening of partnerships with Faith-Based organizations to inspire action and political engagement is another crucial step. Here, food waste and unsustainable consumption practices, which are priorities of the Faith for Earth strategy, should be addressed. Consequently, there is a need to provide policy, innovation, educational, and business opportunities for underrepresented food system actors, elevating traditional agriculture and indigenous knowledge in educational institutions, research methodology and policies. Secondly, promoting the preservation of local traditions and knowledge is a crucial step towards making global food systems more sustainable. For instance, encouraging interfaith dialogues to promote information and knowledge exchange would help empower farmers and religious youth to be agents of change and play an active role in creating solutions that would address the

deficiencies of our current food systems and strengthen food security. Finally, it is also essential to focus on combating inequality with an indigenous and climate justice approach. To commit to the equitable transformation of food systems that places indigenous and smallholder farmers at the heart of our development as opposed to just large agribusinesses, it must be ensured that marginalized communities and workers at risk of being left behind are uplifted. There should be a focus on [investing in innovative, evidence-based solutions from Indigenous and faith communities](#) and building alliances among small farmers, businesses, NGOs, governments, Indigenous communities, and faith groups.

To move forward, it is an absolute necessity to stop isolating and compartmentalizing environmental climate change issues, as all environmental (and social or economical) crises are interlinked. Food systems relate to climate change, biodiversity loss, species extinction, and water, soil and air pollution, among others, which should be treated as a whole.

Way Forward

In order to achieve these objectives and witness actual change in global food systems, there is a crucial need for the promotion of concrete, immediate, simple and bold action at all levels. According to the Faith + Food Coalition [Interfaith Statement](#) for the United Nations Food Systems Summit and the Faith + Food Coalition [Report](#) titled “Sustainable, Equitable, Resilient: An Ethical Approach to Global Food Systems”, the next steps are to:

- Promote individual action at the household and community level, such as home gardening, plastic-free grocery shopping, learning how to properly store food, donating food excess instead of wasting it, greening places of worship and religious practices, etc.
- Protect, support, and promote breastfeeding, which is the first food system that provides the ideal first food to the most vulnerable human beings.
- Restore degraded ecosystems and protect ecosystems while connecting farmers to fair and equitable markets to produce better health, social, economic, and ecological outcomes.
- Promote regenerative agriculture and proper waste separation and composting.
- [Build resilience](#) to vulnerabilities, shocks, and stress practices, and incentivize and subsidize the production of healthy, climate resilient, nutritious, local, plant-based foods.
- Push for stricter regulations in food and beverage marketing and promote the use of eco and health labels to encourage more nutritious, organic and sustainable eating habits.
- Guarantee food security and put an end to world hunger, malnutrition, and food apartheid. Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all through sustainability, nutrition, and equity rather than chasing biotechnologies and GMOs to augment the output of food systems. Innovation should be led by a moral compass.
- Call for investments and scaling to be put toward small holders, agroecology, and indigenous food sovereignty.
- Re-align tax systems to drive immediate changes, such as taxing foods that lead to undesirable health outcomes, as well as taxing foods with a high environmental impact and excessive plastic packaging, particularly the single use plastics that are embedded into industrial food systems.
- Hold global leaders and politicians accountable and demand the implementation of inclusive environmental policies that have the power to put a halt to food apartheid and advance equitable livelihoods.

- To discuss the role of Faith in a sustainable food system, UNEP's Faith for Earth is organizing a special session during the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Purpose of Session

This discussion should seek to leverage the role of faith actors in addressing major issues across food systems. Naturally, faith actors can't address all the above factors simultaneously, so focus should be on establishing where faith actors can draw upon their comparative advantages to have the most immediate and positive impact, rather than discussing the broader issues.

Topics of Discussion

Building upon our findings from the Faith and Food Dialogues for the UN Food Systems Summit, this session will explore the interconnectedness of nature and health, food systems and ecosystems, and the pressing need to reevaluate who - and what - the food systems benefits. The failure to support the health of people and the planet is a decision rooted in values and principles, which in this session will be placed front and center as we explore how faith, spirituality, and Indigenous knowledge can help support nature positive solutions - both in food production and food distribution - to drive equitable food systems transformation.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith in Action: Only One Earth

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Tuesday, 3 March 2022; 10am-11.30am East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) are an important, necessary, and a highly influential group of stakeholders in attaining the SDGs and taking environmental action:

- FBOs provide immediate support and care to people on the ground and are closely connected to the communities they are situated in.
- Faith leaders have widespread influence and trust among their communities, and through the lens of faith can inspire urgent environmental action from local to global levels.
- FBOs can influence or facilitate widespread local participation and mass mobilisation for broad behaviour change and cultural shifts, leveraging actions, ideas, and inspiration to ensure a sustainable future.

Given the size of their influence, and the significance of their wisdom and experience, FBOs are key stakeholders in helping to ensure a livable planet for all. To realise their full potential, it is essential to engage and support faith actors through capacity-building activities, which includes education, grassroots coordination and support for taking plans to scale, locally, regionally, nationally and globally. To build close bonds with faith communities worldwide, Faith for Earth has been working on establishing professional relationships with grassroots environmental organisations around the world through the Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs.

Global Coordination - Working Together

In January 2021, Faith for Earth and the United Religions Initiative (URI) which has a global network in 109 countries and 16 regional offices launched a 4-country programme in India, Lebanon, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Ethiopia to support and equip Faith Leaders and community members with the forum and knowledge resources for meaningful, effective and well-coordinated action. Faith for Earth, URI and FaithInvest (Faith Plans Long Term Programme) are organising a session during the Faith for Earth Dialogue. Register for Local Challenges, Local Solutions: Faith Groups for Climate Action on 1 March 2022; 4pm-5.30pm EAT.

India Faith for Earth National Coordination Hub

“India can be a leading country to demonstrate the real and most appropriate connection between humans and their nature.”

Although India is a multicultural and multifaith country, one common denominator unites many religions and indigenous cultural traditions: the “interconnectedness of religious and environmental concern.” Leveraging this Eco Spiritual and cultural tradition in India, and in alignment with UNEP’s Global Strategy, UNEP’s India Country Office has been working to mobilise the wealth of established religions and indigenous culture in India for the cause of the environment.

UNEP’s Faith for Earth Initiative provides the opportunity to do just this by creating a platform for UNEP’s India Country Office to work with India-specific FBOs. Since its inauguration in 2021, the Faith for Earth Initiative’s National Coordination Hub in India has been activating and supporting the power of India’s vast interfaith network of faith leaders, FBOs and community members to drive environmental action at the local, national, and regional level.

The Faith for Earth Councillors Programme

Drawn together by a shared commitment to inspire institutions and organisations to use their faith-based knowledge and capacities for the benefit of People and the Planet, the Faith for Earth Initiative and the United Religions Initiative partnered to launch The Faith for Earth Councillor Programme in 2021. This innovative training initiative works to unite interfaith and intra-faith communities and institutions around climate action.

The FEC Programme is an informal implementation mechanism of UNEP’s Faith for Earth initiative. The Faith for Earth Councillors Programme (FEC) is coordinated by UNEP’s India Office, one of the four Faith for Earth National Coordination Hubs for the Faith for Earth Initiative for the period 2021-2022. The FEC Programme began in January 2021 with the India project. In India, the project was implemented with the support of URI Cooperation Circle members, Religion World and Shristi. The objectives of the project were:

1. Identification of top priorities of SDGs among faith based institutions in India.
2. Sensitisation regarding environmental concerns through focussed groups leading to Faith Ecology Councillors (FEC).
3. Motivate FECs for enabling the institutions to appreciate and act for conservation of natural resources .
4. A network of FBOs prepared to speak and take action supporting planetary crisis.
5. Inspire to take visible local/global action in identified area(s) of focus.

The FEC Programme was structured as a series of training sessions, both online and in person, to prepare faith leaders with the knowledge and resources to effectively communicate with, and inspire, those within their communities to work collectively towards informed and inspired climate action. Each councillor has the opportunity to design, innovate and implement diverse actions towards this goal.

Faith in Action: Only One Earth

All religions, faith traditions and spiritual teachings guide us to care for the bountiful creation of nature, living simply, and preventing the generation of waste. In line with the 2022 World Environment Day theme, 'Only One Earth' and building on the saga of the initiatives that our Faith for Earth Councillors began last year, this session aims to highlight the indisputable fact that the time is now to bring about a transformative change. It is time to live sustainably in harmony with nature and bring about the choices that create an impact on the environment we live in. Choices that can be influenced by spiritual guidance at an individual level and community level.

This session seeks to highlight tools and resources that individuals and communities at the local level can use to alter their choices and address global problems like pollution, desertification and climate change. The session also seeks to provide a call to action to strengthen the movement of living in harmony with nature, translate our values and spiritual teachings into action, empower youth to make sustainable choices and support local initiatives. It aims to strengthen the fabric of interfaith relations at a national level to make our planet a harmonious place to live in.

Purpose of Session

- Reflect and build upon efforts of the Faith for Earth Councillors over the past year.
- Highlight roles of FBOs in driving environmental action.
- Empower youth movements and actions.
- Highlight tools and resources for individuals and communities at the local level.
- Actualize a call to action to strengthen the movement of living in harmony with nature.
- Strengthen interfaith relations at the national level.
- Create a space for dialogue and exchange of ideas about the way forward, exploring India's plan, next steps, priorities.



United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith – the Solution to Pollution?

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Thursday, 3 March 2022; 2pm-3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

The world is facing a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, and it has become evident that a new relationship between people and the planet needs to be forged. The third crisis – pollution and waste – requires a move to sustainable consumption and production practices which will also benefit climate, nature, and biodiversity.

Pollution takes different forms (air, marine, terrestrial, and freshwater) but poses a general threat given that the nature, location or quantity of these substances generate undesirable environmental effects. These adverse effects are likely to be felt disproportionately by marginalized communities and some segments of the population such as people with lower social-economic status or minorities, therefore reinforcing existing inequalities. Equally pollution transcends any human boundaries and pollutants such as greenhouse gases enter our shared atmosphere. This makes it a truly transnational issue as pollution generated in one area can impact other places far away.

UNEP has been driving multilateral efforts to tackle the pollution crisis, including the [Implementation Plan 'Towards a Pollution-Free Planet'](#) adopted at the UNEA-4 in March 2019 through [Resolution 4/21](#), the [Clean Seas Campaign](#), the [Global Commitment to the New Plastics Economy](#), the [Breathe Life challenge](#) among many other examples. Furthermore, UNEP's ongoing commitment to prevent, control and manage pollution is reaffirmed in its [Medium Term Strategy \(MTS\)](#) for 2022-2025, which also highlights the importance of working through partnerships towards a pollution-free planet.

FBO's Role, Engagement and Achievements

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) in particular provide institutional access and outreach to grassroots communities with the power to mobilise and share experiences and learning with faith networks beyond the local level and are underpinned by a moral and ethical duty that informs a



deep commitment to serving the vulnerable and marginalised. Additionally, all religious teachings contain messages prohibiting or condemning pollution meaning there is great potential for interfaith action here.

Demonstrations of FBO-led action worldwide to address pollution have been growing in number in recent years. A few examples are cited below.

Tearfund's advocacy campaign, the '[Rubbish Campaign](#)' launched in May 2019, has resulted in global mobilisation of networks to tackle pollution, calling the world's biggest plastic polluters to take responsibility for their plastic waste, demonstrating its effect on low-income households and economies. More than 50,000 actions were carried out, and petitioners also pledged to cut their own single-used plastic.

The [Interfaith Oceans](#) campaign is a great example of multifaith commitment towards the protection of oceans and marine ecosystems. Supported by the World Stewardship Institute and the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCC), the campaign encourages religious and spiritual communities to collaborate with scientists to "appreciate the gifts of the ocean systems, species, and coastal communities, and work together to protect and restore them".

Another valuable interfaith initiative was launched in 2015 by the Birmingham Council of Faiths. Gathering a variety of faith communities, the [Footsteps](#) campaign aims at supporting interfaith and multifaith action to reflect on current high carbon-related challenges and engage towards a low carbon future.

Finally, The [Hope Cathedral](#), a project by the Church of Norway that was launched on World Environment Day 2021, is one illustrative case of interfaith engagement in tackling pollution and waste challenges. This social, economic and environmentally sustainable initiative began in 2018 consists of a "cathedral with a wooden construction inspired by traditional Norwegian stave churches and blocks made out of plastic found in the sea", stressing one of the greatest environmental challenges of our time: marine pollution.

The Multifaith Working Group on Pollution

Recognising the great potential of FBOs for inspiring behaviour change and catalysing action to address current environmental challenges, in 2021 UNEP's Faith for Earth initiative partnered with a diverse group of FBOs to create the Working Group on Pollution. It aims at facilitating a global interfaith response to the pollution crisis through engaging the faith community in addressing pollution issues, mobilising the power and influence of faith leaders and communities particularly at a grassroots level, identifying critical challenges and providing a forum for the exchange of knowledge and learning globally, regionally, and locally. The core member organisations constituting this Working Group are the Anglican Consultative Council, IFEES, Islamic Help, Tearfund, UNEP MGCY and Plastic Bank. Recently, GreenFaith India has also joined the Group.

In September 2021, the Working Group conducted a mapping exercise to gather existing FBO-led initiatives addressing pollution issues worldwide, identifying critical areas and faith-based commitment. From this exercise, priority areas have been outlined and the Group aspires to establish specific task teams to tackle them.

Way Forward

One of the desired outcomes of the Working Group on Pollution is the formulation of **Sub-Action Groups** based on the predominant thematic areas outlined by the aforementioned mapping exercise, engaging faith-based partners with clear output and means of implementation. The purpose is to mobilise local and regional faith actors on their specific thematic area, to facilitate an exchange of best practices and science-based knowledge resources for the engagement of faith actors, and to build momentum of faith actors for meaningful engagement in intergovernmental, governmental, interreligious and intrareligious dialogue.

Another desired outcome of the Working Group is the design and development of a **Catalogue** showcasing examples from around the world of faith-based action to address the plastic and waste crises. This Catalogue will be composed of case studies related to different thematic areas (air pollution, marine and coastal pollution, freshwater pollution, waste pollution, chemical pollution etc) and examples of local, regional and global activities led by FBOs. The objective of this Catalogue is to recognise the important work that FBOs have been doing to tackle pollution, as well as to inspire more organisations and individuals to take action on this matter.

The Faith for Earth Dialogue consists of 25+ session co-designed by leading faith-based organisations. [Register](#) for the session on *Faith – the Solution to Pollution?* on 3 March 2022; 2pm-3.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00).

Purpose of Session

- Create a space for dialogue and exchange of views on pollution-related issues;
- Introduce the purpose and efforts of the Multifaith Working Group on Pollution Action;
- Support knowledge sharing, exchanging experiences and the promotion of good practises;
- Mobilise engagement between and among FBOs and encourage interfaith collaboration in tackling pollution issues. Invite FBOs to engage with the Sub-Action Groups and spread the message among their networks.

United Nations Environment Programme

Faith for Earth Initiative

Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2

Faith for Stockholm+50

Details

[About the Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 5.2](#)

[Register](#)

Date: Friday, 4 March 2022; 4pm-5.30pm East African Time (GMT+03:00)

Background

Four interconnected crises – climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, the global pandemic – are jeopardizing global economic and social well-being while also seriously undermining the progress made in terms of poverty and world hunger reduction, gender equality, quality of life, among other elements. COVID-19 has especially limited the effectiveness of the SDGs with efforts to curb climate change and other global issues experiencing stalling and even backwards development. Indeed, humanity is facing the worst human and economic crisis of its lifetime!

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limited effectiveness and success rates that the SDGs have had, even without the occurrence of the global pandemic. The SDGs are failing to bring the transformative change that they were supposed and expected to bring in order to fulfill the ambitious 2030 Agenda goals. Scientists have concluded, that “The current worldwide sustainable development model is threatening to reverse years of progress, if strategies do not drastically change,” especially in regard to the lack of coordination across the 17 separate goals.

Without decisive action, humanity is gambling away its last chance to turn the tide and create a viable and resilient future or all. This is why 2022 must and will be a pivotal year for social justice and societal progress in the context of the 2030 Agenda. As put by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, this upcoming year is “*the make it or break it year.*”

The international Stockholm+50 high-level meeting serves as an urgent, all-out effort to turn things around, thus playing a crucial role in making 2022 a year defined by successful global action. Thus, the core aim of Stockholm+50 is to accelerate progress towards the SDGs, overcome the setbacks induced by the global pandemic through long-term recovery plans, and redefine humanity's relationship with nature to foster prosperity within the planetary bounds. Five elements are center stage at Stockholm+50: Regeneration, Recovery, Rebalance, Renewal, and Reimagination.



Government Offices of Sweden



Stockholm+50 will be held in Stockholm on the 2nd and 3rd of June 2022, which marks the 50th anniversary of the UN's Summit on the Human Environment, which was the UN's first major conference on international environmental concerns held in Stockholm in 1972. At Stockholm+50 *"Fifty years of environmental history will meet the future [...], with eight years left to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda,"* thus marking a once in a lifetime opportunity to consider the current global challenges, prospects, and needs to secure a sustainable future for future generations where no one is left behind!

Purpose of session

This dialogue session will provide a space to discuss the success and challenges FBOs have met while implementing the 2030 Agenda and global SDGs, while also commemorating and reflecting on the progress that has been achieved on a global scale (i.e., restoring ecosystems, protecting human rights, promoting world peace, establishing equal rights and climate justice, limiting world hunger, etc.) and envisaging the ideal future that is to be achieved in order to benefit humanity as a whole.