

# COMMISSION V:

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by  
Protecting the Earth

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Report from the 10<sup>th</sup> World Assembly



Religions for Peace 

## Commission 5 Report: Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Protecting the Earth

The level of urgency to address the threats to the earth is very real and unescapable. To effect change on the needed level, there are three areas of change and action that need to be addressed urgently.

These levels of change and engagement are the individual, community/local institutions and systemic. Examples of action on all three levels are given in the full report.

### Individual level:

Commitment to reducing meat and water consumption, energy use, carbon-intensive modes of transport, commit to recycling, planting, etc. We need to focus on the importance of establishing for ourselves eco-spiritual values and practices and act as examples to others as religious representatives, and listen to our indigenous fore-bearers, women and youth. Ongoing commitment to listening with humility and reverence to their wisdom and input will help and heal us all.

### Community level:

This is done by coming together to green our places of meditation, prayer and worship and educating participants. An example: local religious institutions learning to honour water sources with our friends and community leaders, using 100% renewable energy, etc. And collaborate with all members of faith and secular groups in these local processes, especially supporting marginalised groups and come to the aid of communities in biodiverse centres under extreme threat.

### Systemic level:

Having religious leaders and organisations come together to advocate for strong environmental policies, and for religious groups to join in coalitions and mobilizations with civil society allies addresses the political and economic spheres at the necessary level of engagement.

Action on all three of these levels are absolutely necessary.

We encourage everyone to study the commission paper, the reports from the Women and Youth Pre-Assemblies and the official commission report we are submitting to understand ways you can assist in change on all three of these crucial levels.

These suggestions, action plans and individual commitments span various fields. **RfP** is asked to consider structuring and implementing decisions/policies based on these motions and suggestions using an outline with the field topics listed below:

Individual, community, commercial, agro-industrial and high-tech industry were all identified as key stakeholders. Each of these key role players need to understand the concrete actions required for the rehabilitation of mother earth. This responsibility requires prevention, education, legislation and sensitization to be effective.

## Individual action solutions proposed to **RfP**:

- Ask individuals to set a measurable goal of reducing water usage by 25% and consider fasting once every two weeks and only drink water, walking instead of driving when possible.
- When people do their spring cleaning, there is plenty not used that can be used second hand for someone else instead of buying new. Ask individuals to make the effort to put waste in 5 bins for recycling instead of 1 trash bin. We don't have to own a lot, borrow books, instead of buying, make circles of friends that can share resources instead of everyone feeling they need to buy everything.
- Ahimsa/nonviolence and balancing wants and desires and respecting other opinions is very important. Urge people to commit to something(s) individually.
- Walking and bicycle usage for local transport in place of cars
- Develop a range of ritual and spiritual practices to enable people of faith to listen more closely to the voice of nature and the teachings and wisdom of indigenous peoples

## Community action solutions (to be encouraged and shared by **RfP**)

- Religious communities need to come up with ethical, moral guidance on this issue.
- Places of worship need to commit to so that they are not contributing to emissions. Transport needs to be electric or use biofuel. Forest management for absorbing carbon. We need to consider more vegetarian practices and convert to green electricity/energy. If religious communities comply, they can get green diplomas. Reduce flying when possible. If we need to fly to such events in the future, we have to contribute to a fund for reducing carbon compensation.
- Religious communities to in list the help of youth in service projects (such as tree planting project proposed below to **RfP**)

## Institutions (**RfP**) action solutions:

- Promote green concepts and share education about plant-based eating.
- University of Sustainability and Social Justice brought forward 3 challenges to **RfP**:
  1. **RfP** to have climate be key issue at next assembly
  2. **RfP** to ask all faiths to address and pray for and take action for climate change in every religious service.
  3. 30% of greenhouse gasses are caused by meat industry. Encourage people of faith to move to a plant-based diet with meat as a delicacy only on occasion only if at all.
- Provide a radical and urgent response to massive species loss.
- **RfP** to work with governments to implement sustainable policies.
- **RfP** to put pressure on governments and unions to create new laws such as in Finland that by the end of this year, no more plastic bags and all households to have recycling bins. Product companies have to put how the product can be recycled on the product and where to put it. Recycling on all public streets. All public events should be plastic free. Higher taxes to be placed on all single use products.
- Many youth do not want to engage in spirituality in a temple/mosque, but many want to give their time in service. **RfP** to please help us with service led projects. In honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gandhi, 150 trees are being planted in London. He calls on all to plant peace gardens all around the world. Proposed project to be call "Planting for Peace."
- Foster cross-border collaboration for solidarity on the environment by religious groups
- **RfP** should put equal emphasis on climate change and biodiversity are important to survival to the earth. Keeping the climate from rising more than 1.5 degrees is critical.
- **RfP** to use its influence at the UN to motion for a council for the protection and survival of environment and biodiversity. Clearer guidelines and policies are needed for environmental engineering.

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- **RfP** to share Carbon neutral programs/education with places of worship.
- Encourage religious and spiritual institutions to align their investments with their values, shifting out of fossil fuel and extractive industry investments into clean technologies, climate solutions
- Provide religious groups with alternatives to unsustainable practices; don't just tell them not to do something, tell them what to do.
- Develop educational materials to help religious groups teach and pass on environmentally friendly values – respect, moderation, stewardship
- NGOs, faith communities and environmental organizations in Scotland work together and have now gained positive influence to pressure government and the government has now committed to the goal of 0 carbon emissions by 2045. It is amongst the first countries to make such a commitment. Scotland has a unique opportunity when hosting COP 26 in Nov 2020 to use this effective coalition to encourage governments to make strong climate targets. **RfP** can see this as an example as it considers how to form strong coalitions worldwide.
- Forest fires (8.8million acres were burned in 2018) are a huge problem worldwide. **RfP** asked to help with implementation of the existing technologies worldwide.
- We need to be supported by media and communication network and have technology to achieve this. We cannot miss the indigenous experience and input. It is essential and **RfP** to please consider the following indigenous knowledge and input share it, spread it and honor them for sharing it:
  1. We have forgotten where the water comes from. Groups need to find the source and give thanks at least four times a year. Request congregations to go to the places where the water comes from and give thanks to this source of life.
  2. Invite people to go embrace trees together to connect and know how to care for them.
  3. Propose that **RfP** help build conscious of the 17 centers of major biodiversity, plant trees in those places to show that we are happy to rebuild and reforest those countries and then go help reforest others. Those that are not mega diverse need to help because of these places disappear we are all done. After 20 years then beginning planting in the other countries. In the Mayan calendar has 20 days each day is for a different things such as for trees, water, etc.
  4. Introduce to mainstream the indigenous practices to preserve seeds. In each country with indigenous people, these people must be consulted and collaborated with on how to preserve seeds. How to work with the different phases of the moon, when to plant. The elders know how to do this.

## Systemic Actions

- Advocacy by religious groups in support of strong climate change policies, and strong policies to prevent deforestation
- Participation by religious and spiritual groups in multi-sector coalitions, campaigns and mobilizations to address climate and environmental concerns
- Oppose efforts to promote the increased use of nuclear energy
- Press for reform the UN system so that it prioritizes environmental concerns to a far greater degree.
- Support the Interfaith Rainforest Initiative, which is advocating for the protection of rainforests globally, with a focus in Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Peru, Colombia and Indonesia
- Recognizing the difficulty of this, and that different approaches are relevant in different locations, increase the religious community's level of political engagement.

## **Closing remarks by rapporteurs/moderator:**

- Religious communities need to recognize and articulate their vision for the future. The vision is fundamental and creating a worldview will help find a sustainable way forward in our faith communities.
- Religious groups on their own are not powerful enough to make lasting change. We have to enter partnerships so that we can have impact at the level that is needed. Local projects are good, but they are not enough. Strategic collaboration is essential.
- We all need to be part of a movement that transforms the world, to think and act in this global vision and scope of ambition as well as to share best practices with one another.
- Individual and collective action and shared ethical values will provide the solutions to the climate and ethical crises we are facing that requires great responsibility.
- A minimum standard of ethical values and moderate practices needs to be committed to.

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Below are some additional minutes that may be useful to the Commission Review Committee taken over the two days of Commission 5 consultation.

## **Regional Reports:**

### **North American Report:**

Religious leaders must lead by example, provide shelters, moral/spiritual responsibility of promoting sustainable practices. Focus on indigenous approach of talking about the earth as our “Mother Earth”, our source of life and developing a relationship with her. Very linked to women and the importance of the feminine role in the protection of the environment. We as people of faith need to give people hope. Appreciation of Pope for acknowledging the contribution the indigenous people have to make in this process.

### **Asian/Pacific Report:**

Global change is really affecting this region. Typhoons in Japan have become bigger and more frequent such as the recent typhoon that was the biggest in 140 years resulting in very much destruction and fatalities. More than 300 religious institutions came to the aid and gave shelter, etc. This issue needs to be tackled now. “Know when is enough” appreciate what we have and only take what is truly needed.

### **European Report:**

People often feel fear and hopelessness. Religions have teachings and it is the responsibility for them to spread hope, encourage change, religious values linked to activities. Working with youth is particularly powerful as is religious leaders showing action such as planting trees, limiting meat consumption in a positive way could be effective. Be careful not to feed into popularism and extremism. Regulation by government and lobbying and working together with other organisations is also imperative. Lobby governments to invest more and contribute more to sustainable energy and other sustainable living. Showcase good practice. **RfP** asked to consider using language that shows urgency and to provide guidance on how to do this.

### **Latin America and the Caribbean:**

The root cause of the environmental problem is that we have broken the critical relationship with each other and with nature. The indigenous people are critical. Poverty, inequality and consumerism cause these need to be healed to restore.

### **Women Pre-Assembly:**

Summary: Pollution, plastics, emissions, water, mining and deforestation are the major issues identified. The women consulted and made some commitments to actions that include the following: Children must be educated by example; women must champion sustainable practices, support youth climate strikes. Women must adopt sustainable consumption habits, press schools and businesses to do the same. Need to take strong stances. Women made a commitment to pray daily, make eco-bricks, save grey water for home use, commit to planting 1 tree/year, work on an interfaith level, move towards less meat consumption. (Full report below)

### **Youth Pre-Assembly:**

The lack of education, accountability. We are working towards laws that need to be, we look to our leaders, we look to the youth to become advocates and to actively be involved in creating change,

they count on the support of **RfP** to create a platform to carry this forward. Share in our daily worship and religious spaces these concepts.

Request to encourage less wastage at Assembly events.

Submitted by Hailey Fudu [haileyfudu@gmail.com](mailto:haileyfudu@gmail.com)

### 3 Key issues identified:

- Pollutions from plastics, omissions, etc. that contribute to environmental degradation and global warming
- Water security problems due to draught, mismanagement, overuse and lack of protection
- Environmental degradation due to mining, deforestation and exploitation

Action plans need to be individual, collective, by government, multinational companies and civil society and religious organizations at the international, national, regional and local levels.

Mother earth needs to be protected. All our faiths emphasize and indigenous traditions teaching this, and this sacred trusteeship and interdependence of all living things, needs to be acknowledged.

To action these needs the workshop participants suggest the following:

- Promote this interdependence by getting people of all faiths to work together and produce a booklet (can be electronic to save paper) with faith/traditional teachings and scriptures on environmental protection
- Women must champion the education and show examples of sustainable living in their daily practices
- We must support public ceremonies, protests, youth endeavors such as the upcoming global climate change protest in September 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>
- Share our actions with one another internationally to encourage and support various initiatives with the help of **RfP** to build this communication link
- We need individual consumer commitment to act sustainably and consciously (with our purchases and practices) to shift the company's products, production and practices. If we don't support poor practices, they will have to change.
- Advocate to get schools, commercial establishments, etc. to change policy.
- Teach our families to consume carefully and push our men and children to follow and support through our *positive* Peace practices that support Mother Earth.

In addition, the women of the group made some promises to one another and the Women's Assembly and encouraged the other participants to also adopt these practices to show their commitment to our Mother.

- Pray and plant the seeds of intention for the success of these endeavors
- Create eco brick (2lt bottles stuffed tightly with 500g of non-recyclable rappers) these can then be used to build and will prevent litter and waste
- Save water and commit to using grey water in our homes
- We all commit to planting at least one tree a year
- Support initiatives for environmental protection for forests, oceans, rivers, etc.
- Work with people of all faiths and spiritual traditions in solidarity and unity
- Print as little as possible (and use recycled paper)
- Stop eating meat every day