



WORK BOOK

Religions for Peace 
10th World Assembly



LINDAU, GERMANY • 20–23 AUGUST 2019



Religions for Peace

10th World Assembly

LINDAU, GERMANY • 20–23 AUGUST 2019

Introduction	2
1. <i>Advancing Shared Well-Being</i> as a Multi-Religious Vision of Positive Peace	3
2. <i>Advancing Shared Well-Being</i> by Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts	27
3. <i>Advancing Shared Well-Being</i> by Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies.....	55
4. <i>Advancing Shared Well-Being</i> by Promoting Integral Human Development	87
5. <i>Advancing Shared Well-Being</i> by Protecting the Earth.....	107

Introduction

The documents in this workbook provide background and context for the *Religions for Peace* 10th World Assembly. Under the Assembly theme, “**Caring for Our Common Future: Advancing Shared Well-Being,**” *Religions for Peace* has prepared the following background papers:

1. *Advancing Shared Well-Being* as a Multi-Religious Vision of Positive Peace
2. *Advancing Shared Well-Being* by Preventing and Transforming Violent Conflicts
3. *Advancing Shared Well-Being* by Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies
4. *Advancing Shared Well-Being* by Promoting Integral Human Development
5. *Advancing Shared Well-Being* by Protecting the Earth

These papers are intended to serve as catalysts for Assembly participants to identify issues of common concern and suggestions for collaborative action on the local, national, regional and global levels of the *Religions for Peace* network.

The papers do not attempt to define their respective fields; rather, each one provides a brief survey of the global challenges we face and the actual and potential roles that religious communities can play in responding to them. Though there are many wonderful works that religious communities have been undertaking, only a few cases have been cited in this Workbook as illustrative examples to further spark discussions and sharing during the Assembly.

Our appreciation goes to the principal writers of the papers – Dr. William F. Vendley, *Religions for Peace* International; Dr. Mark Owen, Winchester Centre of Religion, Reconciliation and Peace; Dr. Katherine Marshall, Georgetown University/World Faiths Development Dialogue; Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN); and Gary Gardener and Rev. Fletcher Harper, GreenFaith. We would also like to thank all those within the *Religions for Peace* network and beyond who provided valuable inputs and feedback in the preparation of this Workbook.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to the government of the Federal Republic of Germany for their generous support that enabled *Religions for Peace* to develop these papers.

We hope that these papers are a helpful resource during and after your participation in this 10th World Assembly.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Advancing *Shared Well-Being*
as a Multi-Religious Vision
of *Positive Peace*

Introduction

Religions for Peace respects each religion's vision of Peace as being sincerely held by the believers of that religion. While great care is taken to avoid a "syncretistic" blending of the beliefs of different religions, *Religions for Peace* recognizes that diverse religious visions of Peace provide foundations for carefully discerning the elements of a shared vision of Peace. This discernment expresses a consensus in shared values, notwithstanding the differing beliefs and doctrines that are unique to each religious tradition. Consensus in terms of shared values provides a foundation for *Religions for Peace's* expression of principled commitment: *Different Faiths—Common Action*.

"Peace is *more* than the absence of war." This widespread insight points to the *positive* dimension of Peace. Each religious tradition has a *positive* vision of Peace rooted in its respective experience of the Sacred. Each *positive* vision of Peace is a fecund notion of flourishing that summons persons to unfold their human dignity and "welcome" the dignity of the other. Each calls persons to advance communal flourishing with just institutions and enjoins persons to live in harmony with the natural world. Each calls persons to live in harmony, love and compassion and directs them towards an ultimate state of positive fulfillment.

Each religious community's positive vision of Peace also helps its believers to bring into the light the profound gaps, contradictions and personal and social failures that mark human experience and threaten Peace.

From its beginning, *Religions for Peace* has labored to discern both shared elements of *positive* Peace and the major threats to Peace.¹ Ultimately, advancing *positive* Peace and addressing the grave threats to Peace are inextricably related.

The other Assembly Commission Papers focus significantly on today's threats to Peace. This paper sets forth the notion of *Shared Well-Being*² as an anticipatory and heuristic notion of *positive* Peace.

¹ See Annex 1 for a summary of these related discernments in previous Assemblies.

² *Religions for Peace* first began to speak of *Shared Well-Being* over a decade ago as a multi-religious cipher for *positive* Peace. The World Council's Strategic Plan, issued in 2013, called for the development of *Shared Well-Being* as an expression of *positive* Peace.

I. The Challenges of our Time

A. A World in Pieces

*“We are a world in pieces. We need to be a world at peace.”*³

The United Nations Secretary General’s first sentence refers to our “brokenness” and his second calls for a coherent state of Peace, one that in terms of this analysis necessarily includes a tacit notion of *positive* Peace.

The Secretary General’s line “we are a world in pieces” refers to a disturbing catalog of threats to Peace: there has been a 408% increase of battle deaths and a 247% increase of deaths by terrorism between 2007 and 2016;⁴ the number of refugees has doubled during that same time period;⁵ conflicts continue in many places including Ukraine, Syria, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Yemen, the Holy Land, Myanmar, on the Korean Peninsula and within the Central American States beset by gangs; there is ominous growth in the sophistication of military technologies in space, new energy weapons and artificial intelligence coupled with robotization;⁶ 70% of the global population faces high restrictions on religious freedom;⁷ 767 million people (over 10% of the population) live on less than US\$1.90/day;⁸ and virtually all States are behind in their commitments to the Paris Agreement on climate change.⁹ Addressing these threats to Peace is an urgent responsibility.¹⁰

Importantly, the Secretary General’s declarative statement, “we are a world in pieces,” hints at the broader challenge of establishing Peace. The above-noted threats to Peace have arisen within what could be termed a “meta-crisis” of the Modern Order: Modern democratic tenets—including guarantees of free and fair elections, the rights of minorities, freedom of the press and the rule of law—have come under attack around the world,¹¹ while on the economic front the 9 richest persons today have more wealth than the bottom 4 billion.¹² Such economic distortions prompted Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England, to note: “Just

³ United Nations Secretary General António Guterres, Speech before the United Nations General Assembly, 19 September 2017.

⁴ “Global Peace Index 2017: Measuring Peace in a Complex World,” (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017), Web, <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2017/06/GPI-2017-Report-1.pdf>, 30.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷ “Global Uptick in Government Restrictions on Religion in 2016,” (Pew Research Center: Religion and Public Life, 21 June 2018), Web, <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/21/global-uptick-in-government-restrictions-on-religion-in-2016/>.

⁸ “Poverty,” The World Bank Group, Web, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview#1>, 3 April 2019.

⁹ Climate Action Tracker, Web, <http://climateactiontracker.org>.

¹⁰ This catalogue of threats to Peace should not blind us to the highly promising developments of our time: The nature of the problems humanity faces requires systems thinking on a planetary scale and corresponding modes of moral consciousness that call people to act locally as well as collaboratively towards the entire world. This cosmopolitan shift in our conceptions of challenges and related moral responsibilities is already being nurtured by web-based media that reinforces interdependence among world citizens and their moral awareness. Moreover, this emergent global mindset is today complemented by technological advances that—if morally guided—can further liberate the human family to work together for the *positive* Peace we term *Shared Well-Being* as set forth later in this paper.

¹¹ “Freedom in the World 2019: Democracy in retreat,” (Freedom House, 2019), Web, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Feb2019_FH_FITW_2019_Report_ForWeb-compressed.pdf.

¹² “Reward Work, Not Wealth,” (Oxfam International, January 2018), Web, https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-reward-work-not-wealth-220118-en.pdf.

as any revolution eats its children, unchecked market fundamentalism can devour the social capital essential for the long-term dynamism of capitalism itself.”¹³

Exacerbating the political and economic dimensions of the meta-crisis of the Modern Order, there is today a “meta-crisis” of “truth” within which the very notion of “truth” is contested¹⁴ and so-called “fake news” is tailored for selected audiences for either commercial or political gain.¹⁵

It follows that we need to evaluate the Modern Order in relationship to a robust, multi-religious notion of *positive* Peace. What are the genuine perduring strengths of the Modern Order regarding the establishment of a holistic vision of *positive* Peace? What are its weaknesses? How can a multi-religious vision of *positive* Peace preserve the genuine achievements and strengths of the Modern Order? How can a multi-religious notion of *positive* Peace fill in any gaps or strengthen any weaknesses in the Modern Order? These are highly demanding “second-order” questions that address the “context” of today’s threats to Peace. While prosecuting these second-order questions is demanding and while related answers can seem abstract, the practical impact of preserving the strengths and addressing the weaknesses of the Modern Order in relationship to a multi-religious vision of *positive* Peace is—in the long run—great. Patience is encouraged.

The use of the term “Modern Order” requires a comment: There is a diversity of “Orders” unique to different cultures and states. *Religions for Peace* respects the plurality of Orders and the ways they can potentially foster dimensions of true Peace. Examining diverse Orders in detail requires discernment by competent religious and moral persons living within those Orders. However, the Modern Order impacts all countries in varying ways. For example, the entire UN System within which all States work is largely expressed within the framework of the Modern Order. Therefore, our examination of *positive* Peace in relationship to the Modern Order can be relevant to all States, even those largely or partially organized by a different, even in some ways, competing Order.

B. Strengths and Limits of the Modern Order

Among the great strengths of the Modern Order are its commitments to human freedom, universal human rights and the tolerance of others. These powerful principles, along with notions of free trade, constitute an essential part of the foundation of the Modern Order that lies behind its extraordinary achievements such as the establishment of the United Nations, the production of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the adoption of remarkable United Nations Conventions, the recent adoptions of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

At present, the strengths and weaknesses of the foundational organizing principles of the Modern Order—such as freedom, human rights and tolerance—are becoming increasingly evident. Additionally, the Modern Order has an ambiguous relationship to the notion of the “common good.” It is necessary to examine these

¹³ Mark Carney, “Inclusive Capitalism: Creating a Sense of the Systemic,” Speech given at the Conference on Inclusive Capitalism, (London, 28 May 2014), Web, <https://www.bis.org/review/r140528b.pdf>.

¹⁴ Pope Benedict, Speech in Mariazell, Austria, 8 September 2007.

¹⁵ Alvin Chang, “The Facebook and Cambridge Analytica scandal, explained with a simple diagram,” (Vox, 2 May 2018), Web, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/3/23/17151916/facebook-cambridge-analytica-trump-diagram>.

core principles to discern the ways religions can together affirm and complement them. Doing so can help us to identify key areas of a shared multi-religious vision of *positive* Peace.

1.0 STRENGTH OF THE MODERN ORDER'S NOTION OF FREEDOM

Freedom is a profound mystery at the heart of human dignity. Freedom allows persons to commit themselves to what they hold to be true and valuable. Through their free choices, people engage in self-determination and self-actualization. The Modern Order's notion of freedom includes perhaps the greatest freedom, "religious freedom," through which persons commit themselves to their experience of the Sacred as the source of ultimate meaning and value. Across religious traditions, many religious scholars note that freedom is the great ally of religion, as "forced" religious belief is self-contradictory in its disregard for personal conscience. Respect for freedom also allows a sincere non-religious believer to declare his or her worldview and take actions based on it. In short, the Modern Order is premised on freedom and is exceptional in its radical commitment to it.

By protecting personal freedom, the Modern Order has empowered many to assume unprecedented degrees of autonomy, allowing them to shape their lives in ways they value. Moreover, with the freedom of the Modern Order, the human family communicates, travels and trades more extensively than ever before. Global information and encounters are now a matter of course to a constantly increasing number of world citizens. Today, lifestyles from distant corners of the planet interact, bringing a rich and diverse set of options before the eyes of world citizens.

1.1 LIMITS OF THE MODERN ORDER'S UNDERSTANDING OF FREEDOM

No one needs to explain the value of freedom to the oppressed. But, opposing a lack of freedom is perhaps easier than determining how achieved liberties should operate in a free society. When the harsh shadow of oppression is swept aside, the seeming black and white struggle between freedom and oppression is replaced by the permissiveness of open societies. This begs the question: whose freedom is to be upheld when the freedoms of some collide with the freedoms of others?¹⁶

Does the freedom of the environmental campaigner have priority over economic freedom? Does the freedom of the mother override the potential freedom of her developing fetus? Ought we to prioritize the freedom of those living today over the freedom of coming generations? How is economic freedom related to political freedom? Do they strengthen one another, or does the one undermine the other?

In short, do we adequately grasp the idea of freedom when equating it with a decrease of limitations and an increase in options? Are voluntarily borne obligations denials or manifestations of freedom?

The Modern Order is challenged by these questions—the idea of freedom is in a struggle with itself. Having eaten from the tree of knowledge and having learned the bitter lesson that the freedom of a few can undercut the freedom of others, the Modern Order's notion of freedom has lost its innocence. It seems that, from

¹⁶ Claus Dierksmeier, *Qualitative Freedom – Autonomy in Cosmopolitan Responsibility*, (Springer: New York), 2019. This writer benefited from fruitful exchanges with Dr. Dierksmeier.

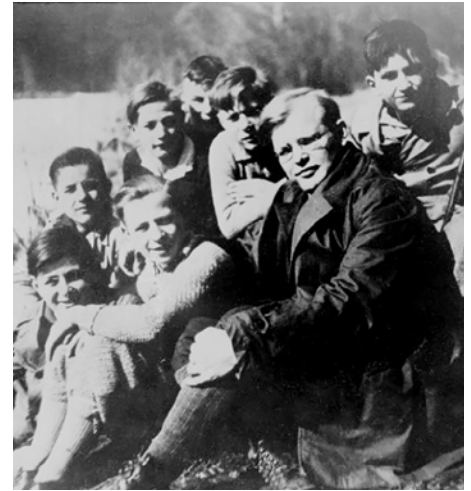
now on, proponents of the Modern Order's notion of freedom make their home in a world both built and endangered by freedom itself.

1.2 RELIGIONS AND THE RECOVERY OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF FREEDOM: THE GROWTH OF THE MODERN SOUL

If the Modern Order's most perverse and lethal expression of freedom is genocide, its most tragic expression nihilism and its most banal expression the rampant consumerism that dominates so much of modern culture, the question to religions today is how they can affirm and deepen the Modern Order's championing of freedom by clarifying its meaning.

The challenge is profound, and if a "common sense" answer is that the deepest meaning of freedom is the capacity to choose the good, it is the concrete examples of men and women willing to struggle deeply with the ambiguity of the Modern Order's notion of freedom—persons like Mahatma Gandhi, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the young Dutch Jewish women Etty Hillesum, Alexandar Solzhenitsyn, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Mother Theresa—that offer profound and usable insight.

Each of these men and women struggled profoundly with the deepest meaning of freedom—many in jails or, in the case of Etty Hillesum, in a concentration camp living in solidarity with fellow Jewish prisoners. Each ultimately found that the ground of freedom is mysteriously spiritual, and that freedom is anything but arbitrary. Each found that the deeper they yielded to the innermost "pull" of freedom, the more it sustained them in their commitment to truth, care for others and resistance to distorted Order that injured human dignity.¹⁷



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor, theologian and anti-Nazi dissident executed in Flossenbürg concentration camp on 8 April 1945

If the Modern Order is understandably quiet about freedom's foundation and goal due to its respect for diversity, its commitment to freedom is an especially profound strength in that it is extended to all persons, but simultaneously it is vulnerable to degraded, capricious or otherwise distorted notions of freedom. The religions, through the examples of their remarkable members, can make clear that freedom is grounded in Sacred Mystery; that it is radically spiritual; that the exercise of freedom opposes any dis-Order that humiliates the meaning of being a person.

Today, the religious communities are called to affirm the Modern Order's recognition of the foundational importance of freedom. At the same time, the religious communities are called to show by example the Sacred grounding of freedom that leads through the despair of nihilism, that rejects the narcissism of mindless consumerism and that expresses itself as radical care—care for all and care for the Order that would help each to actualize his or her human dignity.

¹⁷ David Walsh, *The Growth of the Liberal Soul*, (Columbia, University of Missouri Press, 1997). This author is indebted to Walsh's brilliant work.

2.0 STRENGTHS OF THE MODERN ORDER'S NOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Another pillar of the Modern Order is the notion of human rights. While the antecedents of human rights can be found in a wide variety of historical religious and other cultural streams, their most salient global manifestation is linked to the United Nations.

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, language, religion or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education. Everyone is entitled to these rights without discrimination.¹⁸

Neither religions, cultures, states, social groups or families are the true sources of rights. Rather, all social entities are called to respect the human rights that inhere in persons due to their intrinsic dignity. Indeed, the world's religions' respective experience of the Sacred is understood by them—each in its own way—as the ground for the human dignity from which human rights flow.

The Modern Order is a champion of human rights, and it is hard to overestimate the profoundly *positive* impact of the human rights regime on human well-being.

2.1 LIMITS OF THE MODERN ORDER'S NOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

While human rights can be conflictual, with the rights of one clashing with the rights of another, there is a more profound limitation to the Modern Order's foundation in human rights.

While it is true that “rights impose responsibilities,” it remains that rights do not explicitly summon persons to become “good.” For example, if the catalog of basic rights makes clear that a person's dignity should be honored and protected, this catalog does not make clear a person's inner obligation to develop her or his many potentials. The right to education is surely a basic entitlement essential for entrance into society, but that right does not make clear the “obligation” a student has to patiently unfold—step-by-step—her or his potential to learn.

Thus, even as religious communities affirm the foundational importance of rights, decry their violation, and labor for their recognition, a basic question to the religious communities is “how can they also complement the Modern doctrine of rights?”

2.2 VIRTUE AS A COMPLEMENT TO RIGHTS

It can be argued that virtues are an essential complement to rights. Virtues are habits and they differ from skills in that they intend habitual orientations to value. Virtues and skills are both similar and profoundly different. They are similar in that both are “habits” that take patience and repetition to master. Their profound difference lies in the classes of “objects” they intend. Skills are related to “tasks,” from the rudimentary task of tying one's shoes to the myriad tasks related to advancing the standard of living. From the simple to the most complex, “skills” relate to the effective, efficient and repetitive achievement of tasks. Virtues, on the

¹⁸ “Human Rights,” United Nations, <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/>.

other hand, relate to “values,” to decisions on what is “worthwhile,” what is “valuable.” A virtue is an habitual orientation to a value. The patient and resolute acquisition of personal virtues linked to all dimensions of human being brings degrees of perfection to these dimensions, allowing persons to unfold the myriad potentials of their human dignity in accord with their respective value.¹⁹

Virtues include habits linked to unfolding our personal potentials, as well as those linked to our just and caring relationships with others. The former include habits related to health, honesty, intellectual curiosity, love of learning, prudence, temperance and fortitude, while the latter adds kindness, justice, tolerance, solidarity, harmony with nature, love, compassion and mercy. Although the catalog of virtues varies across religions, it remains that religions have historically regarded the cultivation of virtue as the royal road for unfolding and realizing human potential, achieving just relations with other, and arriving at religiously sublime states of harmony, love and compassion.

When widely shared, virtues help to knit the fabric of social cohesion; they generate “social trust,” which is even more fundamental than a social contract such as citizenship. Without virtuous people, even materially prosperous societies dig their own graves. People in these societies work at cross purposes; they mutilate social trust; they distort their respective scales of value—pursuing selfish gains at the expense of the sacrifice essential to building society as the agent of holistic development.²⁰

Virtues equip people for community, and community is essential for societies to be effective agents of their own development. The way virtues can complement rights can be seen in the relationship between virtue, community and development.

It can be argued that the basis for holistic development is “community.” Community, in this sense, means fellow feelings, shared meanings and values, and a shared commitment to the common good. Persons are born into and abide in community and community is the basic underpinning for all institutions that serve society—from families, schools, civil society organizations, economic institutions and governments to religious and other holistic life-stance communities. These institutions, including the UN, cannot function, or even survive, without a large measure of community.

Take governments: Even if there are good leaders, good policies and enough resources, without a healthy society rooted in community, there is little likelihood of a government serving effectively. Resources and skills can be scarce, adequate or lavish, but without a healthy measure of community they cannot be easily and efficiently deployed for the well-being of the members of society.

So, we must inquire about what undermines community. It has been argued that the main “enemies” of community are: 1) ignorance, 2) individual egoism and 3) group egoism.²¹

¹⁹ Advancing *positive Peace* requires the dynamic interplay of developing skills, virtues and value-based institutions in a “virtuous cycle” in which each makes its contribution, but also fosters and re-enforces the development of the other two. Weakening one, inevitably places distorting stress and over-emphasis on the other two; while strengthening one can invite a concomitant development of the other two. Animated by freedom and protected by rights, this dynamic interaction of virtues, skills and institutions is the true engine of authentic sustainable integral development. The living matrix of this interactive dynamic cycle is “community.”

²⁰ This paragraph and following section on virtues and community draws heavily on and gratefully acknowledges the work and “wording” of Bernard Lonergan, *Method In Theology*, (Darton, Longman & Todd: London), 1972, especially pages 360-361.

²¹ Ibid.

Understandably, this list of three enemies of community was not on either of the lists that were developed in the two tracks (the Member State track and the UN Secretary General track) that advanced the formulation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These respective UN processes rightly developed their own lists of categories that dealt explicitly with the substance of the 17 SDGs. Nevertheless, ignorance, egoism and group egoism—can be understood as a complementary list of “development” challenges with significance across the SDGs and other areas of needed development.

Ignorance is a threat to community when groups of people are denied the education they need to function in their societies. They are effectively barred from entering the mainstream. Importantly, ignorance is also a threat whenever persons and societies unknowingly or semi-knowingly refuse to analyze what thwarts or facilitates their development.

Individual egoism is a threat to community because egoists find loopholes in the social set up; they exploit these loopholes to enlarge their share of particular goods. To the extent persons have figured out and used loopholes to avoid his or her debt to community, they exploit it.

Worse, it's not just individuals who are selfish. Groups, too, learn how to work the system. And they find ways to justify to themselves their taking unfair advantages. They can develop an ideological façade that would justify their ways before the bar of public opinion. If they succeed in their deception, the social process is distorted, and community is eroded. Group egoism calls forth resentment. So, the body-social begins to seethe with hostility. Trust is lost. Cynicism sets in.²²

Ignorance, individual egoism and group egoism threaten community and therefore human development. Without a constant renewal of community, the measure of community currently enjoyed is easily squandered. If community is the genuine basis for society, and a healthy society is the basis for development, the practical question becomes: What can be done to build up the community that underpins a healthy society as the subject of development?

Surely the answer involves multiple factors. However, the cultivation of virtue is a key response to the above-noted threats to community.²³ Becoming virtuous is hardly a solitary act; rather, it is an act of solidarity.

Virtues equip people for community and community is essential for societies to be the effective agents of their own development. Today's question to the diverse religious and other schools of virtue is: What gifts of virtue cultivation do you have to both sculpt the characters of persons working to become good and also to help build the sense of community that is essential for development on all levels—local, national, regional and global?

Far from diminishing the foundational importance of individual human rights, the cultivation of virtue can complement their importance and undergird their recognition. Indeed, widely embraced virtues could nurture coherent communities committed to defending human rights as an integral part of true development.

²² Ibid.

²³ As we shall see, the development of just value-based institutions that honor human dignity and build the common good is another essential response.

3.0 THE MODERN ORDER'S NOTION OF TOLERANCE

The Modern Order is premised on tolerance and *Religions for Peace* has affirmed its vital value for Peace as the following quotes make clear:

” *Tolerance is an active recognition of diversity and means respecting the otherness of the other with whom we differ religiously, culturally or otherwise, with compassion and benevolence.*”²⁴

” *Tolerance is not only a cherished principle, but also a necessity for peace and for the economic and social advancement of all peoples.*”²⁵

The full implication of the true nature of tolerance is perhaps best understood by its opposites: the ugly faces of intolerance, prejudice, discrimination, marginalization and deprivation that shape the daily life of hundreds of millions.

Importantly, promoting tolerance must not be confused as a proxy for lack of conviction, indifference or neglecting one's values.

” *Tolerance is not a concession, condescension or indulgence... The practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions.*”²⁶

On the contrary, true tolerance is threatened by a culture of indifference, where truth claims remain uncontested or, worse, are no longer even seriously made. To dissent with and dispute alternative viewpoints – respectfully and based on reasonable arguments – honors their defenders as worthy of intellectual engagement in a shared pursuit of the truth. Dialectical engagements, far from detracting from tolerance, defend and strengthen a culture of tolerance through the theoretical acknowledgment they generate of the respective worldview of others.

” *Conflicting interests and views are not in themselves a threat to peace. They present a challenge to creatively harmonize different interests. In a culture of peace, everyone should strive to transform situations of conflicting interest so that their power and dynamism are channeled into creative development which promotes peace and harmony.*”²⁷

In short, the Modern Order's advancement of tolerance continues to have incalculably *positive* impacts, not least in the area of religious freedom. Moreover, tolerance is virtuous when it becomes a habitual orientation to respecting the dignity and freedom of the other. Religious communities around the world are beneficiaries of tolerance and need to be its champions.

²⁴ “Declaration on Tolerance: Our Commitment to Justice, Equality and Sharing,” European Council of Religious Leaders-*Religions for Peace*, 15 February 2010, Web, <https://ecrl.eu/our-commitment-to-justice-equality-and-sharing/>.

²⁵ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Declaration of Principles on Tolerance,” 16 November 1995, Web, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13175&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.

²⁶ Ibid, Articles 1.2, 1.4.

²⁷ “Lille Declaration on a Culture of Peace,” European Council of Religious Leaders—*Religions for Peace*, 27 May 2009, Web, http://fund-culturadepaz.org/BarnaDOC/Lille_Declaration_Culture_of%20Peace.pdf.

3.1 SOLIDARITY AS THE COMPLEMENT TO TOLERANCE

Even while appreciating the vital and perdurable importance of tolerance as advanced by the Modern Order, two limitations can be noted.

First, there is the dilemma of tolerating views that one feels to be seriously morally wrong. A standard retort is that “people are free to do whatever they wish so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others.” However, while a rights-based answer is significant, it is not fully satisfactory, as, to repeat, rights do not express an inner summons to become good. It would seem that principled dialogue and teaching by example are a necessary response to this dilemma, while just how one is to negotiate moral differences in truly serious cases is not clear.

Second, and more importantly, religious moral imperatives both include and go beyond tolerance. Religions enjoin their believers to be in “solidarity” with others. Solidarity expresses an existential identification with and commitment to the well-being of the other. Thus, even as the world’s religions can affirm the vital importance of tolerance and work to advance it, they can also position tolerance within the wider concern of active solidarity. The two virtues—tolerance and solidarity—can co-abide, with tolerance functioning as a necessary inner moment within the more profound religious commitment to solidarity. Solidarity calls us to make the other person’s well-being our own vital concern. Solidarity suffers and rejoices with the burdens and beauties of the other. In the solidarity of love and compassion, the “relational self” experiences its own well-being as connected to the well-being of others.

4.0 THE MODERN ORDER’S NOTION OF THE COMMON GOOD

The Modern Order has an ambiguous relationship to the notion of a “common good” (a good for the whole of a society, i.e. a good educational system for all) in contrast to a “personal good” (a good education for a particular person). Importantly, the common good is not adequately understood as simply the aggregate of personal goods. Rather, the common good includes among other factors the shared meanings and values of a society, the personal commitments of civic virtue and the value-based institutions that serve and support all in society to unfold the many dimensions of their dignity.

While a wide variety of views on the common good exist within the Modern Order, a typical position is to focus quite heavily on personal goods. The philosopher John Rawls expresses this tendency toward the priority of personal goods over the common good in his pithy phrase: “Rights over goods,” by which he expresses the Modern Order’s wariness that one person’s notion of the common good may be experienced as an oppressive imposition by another. Rawls, therefore, places the emphasis on the rights and freedoms of individuals, although he acknowledges that some form of the common good can and must be pursued.

Within the Modern Order itself, there are serious counter-reactions to the notion that a healthy social order can be built largely on autonomous individuals pursuing their private goods to the greatest degree possible. Such an extreme approach, it is being argued, “undermines the notion of a good society, leaving its participants ever more isolated, asocial, selfish, calculating and spiritually barren.”²⁸ In short, the Modern

²⁸ As summarized by Linda Raeder in “Liberalism and the Common Good: A Hayekian Perspective on the Common Good,” *The Independent Review*, v 11, Spring 1998, p. 519.

Order manifests a range of views regarding the common good, including new so-called “Communitarians”²⁹ who identify deeply with the Modern Order and yet argue that community and a “common good” that is more than an aggregate of personal goods is essential for the good society.

4.1 EMERGENT MULTI-RELIGIOUS NOTIONS OF THE COMMON GOOD

If the Modern Order has an ambiguous relationship with the notion of the common good, is there an emergent multi-religious notion of it that can be put in the service of the human family? This is not a small question, as the reality referred to by the term “common good” varies within religious traditions. Indeed, the term does not exist in most traditions, although there are corresponding notions in those traditions. Is there, then, a notion of the common good that is acknowledged across traditions?

For a period of two years, a significant number of *Religions for Peace* Co-Presidents convened every three months to discern shared ethical concerns related to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.³⁰ In that process, they were able to discern substantial and still emergent areas of consensus on a shared notion of the common good.

From the religious point of view, the most original common good is the Sacred—God if you are a theist, Eternal Buddha if you are Mahayana Buddhist, or nature infused with the Divine if you are a non-dualist. In the realm of worldly life, the common good includes the earth with its air, soil, water and web of biodiversity that supports all forms of life. So too, it is the store of cultural wisdom and all the institutions that support human dignity ranging from manners and mores to the complex social, economic and political institutions that are integral to societies. Even personal monetary wealth is considered a common good in some traditions. Persons can be caretakers of it, but its ultimate “universal destination” is to build up the common good. Moreover, today, there is an ever-growing notion of a “global” common good that is essential for a shared life on earth. In short, highly significant—if formal—areas of consensus on the common good were discerned by *Religions for Peace* representatives.³¹

Importantly, a multi-religious notion of the common good can both affirm some of the notions of the common good associated with the Modern Order and serve as a powerful catalyst to build a more robust notion where needed.

²⁹ Anglo representatives of the Communitarian stream of the Modern Order include figures like Charles Taylor, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Michael Walzer and others. A major German representative is Hans Joas, while in the field of economics Christian Felber has started a movement on the “economy for the common good.”

³⁰ The meetings were convened by the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Science, *Religions for Peace*, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, and Notre Dame University, with the strong substantive leadership and support of the Fetzer Institute and *Religions for Peace* International Trustee Ms. Christie Brown, among others.

³¹ Even with general areas of agreement across religious traditions, a key point is that a consensual common good is to be negotiated, and the consensual common good in Bhutan can be expected to differ from the common good in Peru. Thus, the common good is necessarily an “analogous” notion, differing from place to place and across time, even as significant areas of consensus continue to emerge, not least on the global level.

II. *Shared Well-Being:* An Emergent Multi-Religious Notion of *Positive Peace*

The following section sets forth the outline of an emergent multi-religious consensus on *positive Peace* as *Shared Well-Being*. The core of *Shared Well-Being* addresses three basic questions: 1) How does an individual become a good person? 2) How do we build a good society? and 3) What is the integral and reciprocal relationship between becoming a good person and building a good society? Answers to these three questions point toward an integral whole that offers a normative heuristic notion of human flourishing, or *positive Peace*.

Shared Well-Being builds directly on the previous section's analysis of the strengths of the Modern Order and complementary strengths of religions. *Shared Well-Being* affirms the profound value of freedom, the great importance of human rights and the perduring significance of tolerance. *Shared Well-Being* also affirms the recovery of the spiritual ground of freedom and the role of virtues as complementary to the importance of rights. The coupling of the virtues solidarity and tolerance is emphasized. Importantly, *Shared Well-Being* expressly links the unfolding of rights-protected human dignity by the cultivation of virtues with the development of the common good, which includes institutions that honor and support human dignity.

Affirming an emergent multi-religious consensus on *Shared Well-Being* could be easily misunderstood as a naïve or reckless trivialization of the foundational differences that mark the ways diverse religious communities understand themselves. Therefore, a series of “precisions” are offered as qualifiers of this emergent notion. To facilitate the flow of the text, these important precisions are elaborated in Annex 2 for interested readers.

A key starting point for the notion of *Shared Well-Being* resides in the fact that across diverse religious traditions, persons are intrinsically “relational.” As a result, becoming a truly realized person is organically linked to all reality to which persons are related: the Sacred, other persons, and the common good that includes the environment. It follows that if all persons are intrinsically relational, in a profound sense, each one's well-being is necessarily “shared.” *Shared Well-Being* follows from religions' understandings of persons as radically relational.

The heart of *Shared Well-Being* is the unbreakable link between actualizing human dignity and building up the “common good” that serves and supports it. If persons are called to actualize all dimensions of their being including the vital, affective, aesthetic, intellectual, moral and religious, then they are called to cultivate the virtues essential to unfolding those dimensions of their being. Simultaneously, the common good, with its value-based institutions, is to be developed to assist all persons in these same dimensions of virtue cultivation.

The relationship between unfolding human dignity and advancing the common good is to be mutually beneficial: what is good for the person is also good for society and vice-versa. In practical terms, the common good is to be evaluated in terms of its adequacy in supporting persons to virtuously unfold their

rights-protected dignity. In turn, each person is to actualize her or his relational being by also contributing in their own way to building up the common good.

Importantly, institutions are for society what virtues are for persons. Like virtues, institutions (notwithstanding their related skill sets) are oriented by social values. Institutions are both informal and formal, ranging from social manners and etiquette, families, schools, civic groups, companies and related economic ecologies, governments, inter-governmental organizations and religious bodies. All are oriented to values. Like virtues for persons, social institutions seek to provide efficient repetitive results in accord with particular values. Institutions with values oriented to *Shared Well-Being* are essential for its realization.

In a highly general fashion, one that needs to be complemented by an appropriate dialectical analysis, *Shared Well-Being* provides a remote criterion for the evaluation of institutions. Do they foster freedom? Do they honor human rights and nurture virtue? Do they, in short, thwart or support the unfolding of human dignity? Do they drain or build up the common good? Do they honor and foster the nexus between unfolding dignity and building up the common good? Do they honor a transgenerational common good, so that today's actions do not undercut future possibilities for flourishing? Answers to these questions are likely to be mixed, calling for a dialectical analysis as the basis for requisite social critique and creative reform.

For example, while business exchanges of goods and services are inherently good, utterly essential for development and have contributed dramatically to human well-being, it would be naïve to ignore the short-term profit-driven character of many of today's largest companies. It would be naïve to ignore the great power of some of these institutions on governments, or the power they exert over the media by their advertising or their power over the market itself. When these institutions work against human dignity and the common good, we are invited to recall the brief section on "group egoism" and how group egoism distorts the community essential for development.

Bucking vested interests and re-aligning institutions around values that support *Shared Well-Being* will call for large reserves of civic virtue. Working together, religious communities can help to nurture and animate the reserves of civic virtue necessary for *positive* social change. Importantly, if *Shared Well-Being* calls for an economics³² and politics of the common good, it also calls for the cultivation of virtuous consumers and committed citizens.

The public notion of the common good is negotiated and emergent from divergent notions of the common good held by diverse communities and persons. In pluralistic societies, it is typically negotiated in terms of public language using public warrants. Religious communities—both individually and in a collaborative alliance such as *Religions for Peace*—can and should be vital partners in these social negotiations. Such a negotiated "consensual" notion of the common good is necessarily emergent, and we should expect development in the notion of the common good.³³

³² An "economics of the common good" can harness the remarkable power of the market so long as the market functions within the moral envelope of the common good.

³³ When the public notion of the common good is less robust in some areas than a particular religious community's notion, that community is invited to serve the public based on its notion of the common good, with respect for the freedom and human dignity of those who are not members of their community and have differing notions of the common good.

While each person is to be supported by the common good in her or his efforts to unfold rights-protected human dignity by relevant virtues, each person is simultaneously called to help build up the common good that can support others. In short, each is to receive support from the store of the common good in her or his efforts to become virtuous, and each is to contribute to the common good to help all others unfold their dignity. This root relationship is diachronic: we are heirs of a common good built significantly in the past, and we are to advance a common good for the future. *Shared Well-Being* provides a framework for engaging the common good with the summons to unfold the human dignity that is protected by rights, cultivated by virtues and supported by value-based institutions that are vital components of the common good.

This reciprocity of unfolding human dignity and advancing the common good is to be mediated by two principles, solidarity and subsidiarity.³⁴

Solidarity: Building on what was noted in section II, solidarity acknowledges that all are to be concerned for all,³⁵ and this concern is diachronic and must extend to future unborn generations. Solidarity calls for the concrete action of care accessible to human agents in their particular circumstances. The opposite of solidarity has been termed the “globalization of indifference” and refers to the widespread apathy regarding others’ well-being.³⁶

Subsidiarity: All persons and all institutions on every level of social organization—from the simplest and most local to the most complex and global—are to be agents of development. Yet, successively higher levels of agency should not arrogate to themselves the legitimate agency of more basic levels of social organization. This principle requires constant re-interpretation given new ways of social organization facilitated by the world-wide-web.

It has long been noted that people perceive reality in conformity with the received notions they use to examine it. Insofar as *Shared Well-Being* honors but also expands the Modern Order’s dominant ways of perceiving reality, we can anticipate attention to vital dynamics of human flourishing “under-noticed” by a more restricted horizon and related analytical tools. Importantly, the notion of *Shared Well-Being* sketched here can welcome the moral insights of deontological and utilitarian moral approaches as well as the virtue approach already noted.

Religious communities, with their profound traditions of spirituality, billions of members, thousands upon thousands of far-flung places of worship and global spokespersons will need to play their roles to advance *Shared Well-Being* as a religious and moral responsibility. Today it is also a pragmatic necessity, for even hard-headed materialistic empiricists are coming to the pragmatic realization that we are all no safer than the least secure among us. From a pragmatic point of view, our personal well-being depends on the well-being of the other; it is necessarily a species of *Shared Well-Being*.

³⁴ The precisions on “homologies” and from “compact to differentiated” noted in Annex 2 apply to these terms, which are borrowed from a particular stream of moral religious reflection.

³⁵ Concrete responsibility is related capacity and in part to proximity to others. Thus, one can have a more general responsibility for all and a more concrete responsibility for those close by. However, this only modifies and does not annul the thesis that in principle “all are for all.”

³⁶ Pope Francis uses this term and it is widely resonant across traditions.

III. Empirical Findings

The above sketched multi-religious notion of *Shared Well-Being* is partially corroborated by ground-breaking research undertaken by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). Besides its celebrated national rankings of peacefulness, it seeks to discern by empirical analysis the “drivers” of *positive* Peace. For that purpose, the IEP has developed a framework based on rigorous analysis, that isolates the factors statistically associated with highly peaceful societies. These factors are grouped into eight pillars and listed below. They interact as a system.

THE EIGHT PILLARS ARE:

- 1 **Well-functioning government** – delivering high-quality public and civil services, engendering trust and participation and generating political stability by the rule of law
- 2 **Sound economic regulations** – leading to competitive businesses and industrial productivity
- 3 **Equitable distribution** – ensuring fairness in access to resources such as education and health as well as crucial private and public goods
- 4 **Assuring the rights of others** – safeguarding tolerance between different ethnic, linguistic, religious and socio-economic groups within the country as well as between genders and age groups
- 5 **Good relations with neighbors** – being conducive to regional integration, foreign direct investment, tourism and human capital inflows
- 6 **Free flow of information** – assuring, through free and independent media, that citizens are well-informed and thus better prepared for participatory decision-making and more resilient in times of crisis
- 7 **High levels of human capital** – assured by a broad and deep system of education which helps people in the process of life-long learning and adaption to change
- 8 **Low levels of corruption** – improving the efficiency of resource allocation and the running of essential public services, which in turn improves confidence and trust in institutions

It is critically important to note that the “Eight Pillars” noted above, while empirically validated as drivers of peace, express *qualitative* (value-based) social choices of the societies marked by them. In the language of *Shared Well-Being*, these societies honor freedom, human rights, and tolerance. Furthermore, they have chosen value-based institutions that build up a common good that serves citizens broadly.

Further research could be mounted to assess the *positive* impacts of religious and other communities showing by example the spiritual depth of freedom, the complementarity of human rights protection and virtue cultivation and the coupling of tolerance with solidarity.

Combining the multi-religious insights of *Shared Well-Being* with the empirical findings of the IEP could lead to a more robust understanding of how societies flourish and thereby provide an enriched base for public policy decisions designed to enhance the drivers of *positive* Peace.

The Eight Pillars give an “empiric” of *positive* Peace that can assist policymakers. Starting with data, it works “from below” to develop a notion of *positive* Peace, while the *Religions for Peace* approach to *positive* Peace as *Shared Well-Being* works from above. We can anticipate that dynamic interaction between both approaches will—over time—greatly clarify the qualitative or “value-based” drivers of *positive* Peace.

IV. Religious Virtues to Heal the Damage

In section II., we saw that the core of *Shared Well-Being* builds on the answers to three basic questions: 1) How does one become a good person? 2) How do we build a good society? and 3) What is the reciprocal relationship between becoming a good person and building a good society? We saw that answers to these three questions combine in an integral whole that is a normative—if heuristic—dynamic notion of *positive* Peace understood as *Shared Well-Being*.

Reality, however, is more complex. To the above three questions, experience painfully demands a fourth: How do we collaborate with the Sacred to heal our personal and social faults?

It is a question that arises in every person who has the courage to recognize that the line between good and evil runs through his or her own heart. It is a question that acknowledges that we, persons and societies, contradict and fail our deepest potentials for goodness; we conspire to inflict damage—sometimes lethal damage—upon others, often perversely calling it “good;” as relational beings, in hurting the other, we lacerate ourselves. We use self-screening rationalizations; we invert the scales of value, prizing selfish personal or group gain over the well-being of all. We are victimizers and victims. Our social body is infected; our social “facts” are a tangled amalgam of the authentic drive to develop and distortions that arise out of ignorance, egoism and group egoism. The infection extends to our institutions, to the very Order by which we organize our collective lives, and, of course, to the succession of Orders we call history.

Although the UN Secretary General offered a pithy expression of our contemporary situation—“we are a world in pieces”—human fault is not a new phenomenon. Brilliant research on what can be called an “archeology of fault” makes clear that symbols of “evil” traverse the entire religious history of the human family and that the common ones are variants of “defilement, sin and guilt.”³⁷

If evil is a pervasive problem, the deepest question for religious people is: What is the Sacred doing about it? Does the Sacred reach only to the surface of our reality? Or does it call upon and enter into our hearts, so that—humbled, healed and newly empowered—we might engage in collaboration to help transform evil?

The question is utterly practical: Just what do the religions counsel when the victims of unjust suffering cry out from the depths of their hearts, when the innocent are slaughtered and the cloth of connection shredded? Just what do the religions counsel when the institutions that are to be built to help us, hurt us? Just what do the religions counsel when people face situations that appear hopeless, when they must bear the unbearable? On a more personal level, just what do our religions counsel when, in moments of unvarnished honesty, we realize that we collude in fault and hide it from ourselves?

Religions are sometimes accused of being unrealistic, and they can indeed be interpreted in a naïve fashion. But, religions’ ruthless prosecutions of human fault in relation to the Sacred disclose profound possibilities of collaboration to overcome evil.

³⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, Harper & Row, 1967. Importantly, without “symbols of evil” we do not even know that we are going astray. Thus, the symbols of evil and the symbols of “salvation” are directly linked.

Each tradition counsels its own practices to heal the ravages expressed in their symbols of evil. These include a commitment to repair injustice based upon unflinching honesty, repentance, restitution and reconciliation; calls for the transformation of social structures that hurt us into ones that nourish us; sober calls for self-sacrifice for others and the common good; calls for the voluntary bearing of innocent suffering; calls for returning good for evil; calls for forgiveness and unrestricted compassion and love.

If the path of collaboration for *Shared Well-Being* offers the taste of joy that gladdens the human heart, it will, nevertheless, be long and difficult, marked by personal and collective failures. In the blaze of sunshine, the religions counsel the virtues that build up the human heart. In the dark night, they speak of Hope anchored beyond human vicissitudes.



Annex 1: Religions for Peace

Historic Discernments of Peace

Previous World Assemblies of *Religions for Peace* (1970, 1974, 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1999, 2006, 2013) have discerned both *positive* and negative elements of Peace. These discernments provide a base that can be extended and built upon in Lindau. The following notes elements of this ongoing discernment.

A. DISCERNMENT OF SHARED ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE PEACE

The following elements of *positive* Peace provide a base for further discernment:

- Peace is central to each of our respective religions.
- Each religion has its way of calling for a “change of heart” or “awakening” that can nourish a spirit of self-restraint, humility and self-sacrifice essential to building Peace.
- Social institutions need to support the unfolding of human dignity.
- Our respective faiths compel us to work together to build Peace.
- We affirm common humanity in which all men and women, including children, are recognized as human beings endowed with inalienable dignity and with rights and responsibilities that flow from that dignity.
- The vulnerability of each person calls us to respond to the vulnerability of all. We are to stand on the side of the most vulnerable, including those denied rights, the poor and the oppressed.
- Women—equal in dignity with men—are irreplaceable and co-equal partners in peacebuilding. All believers – men and women alike – share the responsibility to respond to violence against women.
- Children’s rights belong in the mainstream of human rights.
- Peace includes a harmonious relationship with the natural world.
- We are committed to building a Global Culture of Peace, which includes the healing of historical grievances.
- We are committed to “Shared Security” that recognizes that the security of one is linked to the security of all. Shared Security builds on and extends legitimate notions of “national security” and “human security” (the concern of persons within states to be free from threats within their respective states).
- We have a fundamental religious duty to “Welcome the Other.”
- The last Assembly (2013) dealt provisionally with the notion of *Shared Well-Being*, noting that it can be understood as the holistic state that truly honors and supports human dignity and the common good that is essential for the unfolding of human dignity.¹

¹ The *Religions for Peace* Strategic Plan, prepared in the aftermath of the 2013 Assembly and adopted by the *Religions for Peace* World Council, calls for the active development of the notion of *Shared Well-Being* as an organizing concept for a multi-religious vision of *positive* Peace.

B. DISCERNMENTS OF SHARED THREATS TO PEACE

The following represent historic discernments of threats to Peace that provide a base for further discernments in Lindau be built upon and extended by the Assembly.

- Religious believers have very often betrayed their commitments to Peace.
- Religions have all too often been misused in support of nonreligious purposes such as cultural and political violence, including terrorism.
- Global society suffers a profound spiritual crisis.
- Arms, including weapons of mass destruction, continue to threaten humanity and defense spending distorts development.
- The Cold War has given way to today's conflicts fueled by nationalistic, ethnic and religious forces.
- Terror is advanced in the name of religion.
- Memories of grievances and suffering are often exploited.
- Human rights abuses and social and cultural violence threaten people around the world.
- Tyrannical systems and elitist ruling groups prevent multitudes of people from shaping of their futures, often abusing their civil and political rights.
- Many states are experiencing decreasing social cohesion, leading to increased violence and weakened abilities to achieve moral consensus across group lines.
- The rights and well-being of women, children and families are constantly in jeopardy, and systemic inequities in the distribution of opportunities and resources persist.
- Extreme poverty thwarts the development of millions of persons.
- We are endangering future generations by our depletion of nonrenewable natural resources, our pollution of air and water with chemical and radioactive waste, and our over-exploitation of the soil in many parts of the world.
- There is an alarming rising tide of social hostility that threatens the human family. This hostility toward the "other" takes the form of intolerance and, too often, violence. Some groups within our own religious communities misuse religion to foster hostility toward others.

Annex 2: Precisions Regarding *Shared Well-Being*: A Heuristic Multi-Religious Notion of *Positive Peace*

The five precisions noted below are useful when considering the account of the emergent heuristic notion of *Shared Well-Being*:

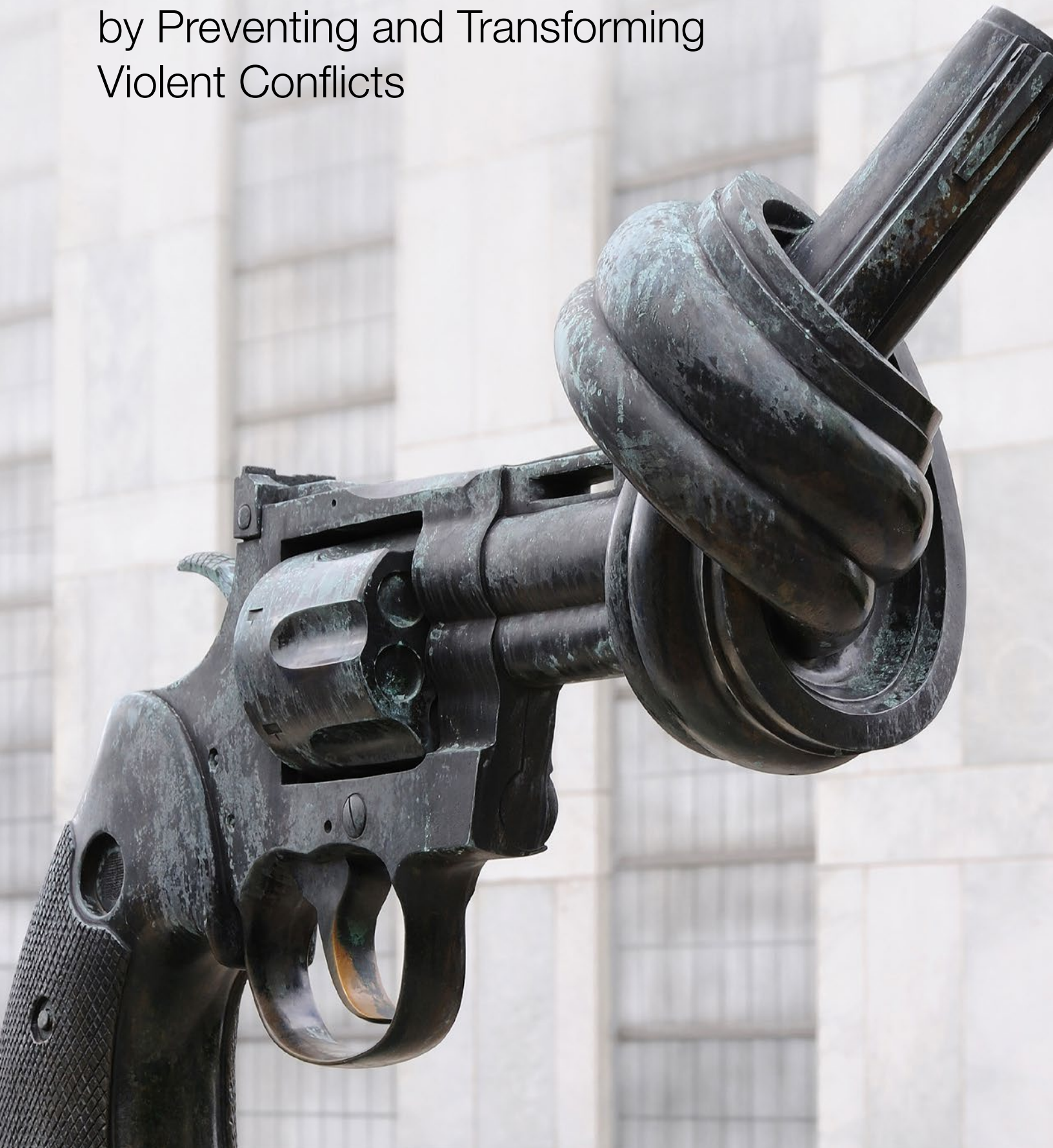
- **Homologous Relations:** The emergent model recognizes that each religious tradition has nested foundational terms and fundamental presuppositions, and that, hence, the notion of *positive Peace* of a particular tradition can only be fully understood in relation to the terms and presuppositions of that tradition. The notion of “homology” can, however, provide a modest but helpful way of comparing elements of *positive Peace* across diverse schools. Homologies, in our use of the term, compare “functional equivalencies” across diverse systems. Homologous elements of *positive Peace* are those that have a similar “function” in diverse religious systems. The model of a modest emergent consensus acknowledges the “homologous” character of its assessments of “similarity,” and thereby retains the “dissimilarity” of the respective religious traditions.
- **From Compactness to Differentiation:** If religious communities have “originating” experiences that serve as their respective grounds, the dynamism of these communities manifest in their responses to new historical circumstances through a process of re-expressing themselves called “traditioning.” In the process of traditioning, a community encounters new challenges and labors to “faithfully” re-express itself in relation to these challenges. The relatively “compact” and highly fecund originating experiences within a given tradition are thereby further differentiated. It follows that an emergent multi-religious notion of *positive Peace* may be based on each community further differentiating its own relatively compact tradition in relationship to *positive Peace*.
- **Bi-lingualism and the need for Public Language:** Religious communities are today challenged to become bi-lingual.³⁸ Each religious community communicates among its follower in what can be termed its “primary language,” which includes all the carriers of meaning of that tradition. The employment of religious primary language is the normal way communities communicate with their own members. However, sectarian religious language is not as useful when trying to communicate beyond the boundaries of a religious community. Today, religious communities are challenged to be doubly creative: to engage contemporary challenges with the creative use of their respective primary languages for their internal use and to transpose their expressions of religious care into a species of “public” language. The great strength of the latter is that provides a medium for diverse communities to find consensus in terms of shared values and thereby establish a common framework for action, even as each religious community continues to hold and develop its respective primary language.

³⁸ William Vendley, “Religious Differences and Shared Care: The Need for Primary and Secondary Language,” *Church and Society*, September/October 1992, pp. 16-22. [Published by the Social Justice and Peacemaking Unit of the General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)]

- **Local and Global:** Religious communities often exist on local, national, regional and often global levels. Each context is distinct, and therefore the highly generic emergent consensus noted in the paper needs to be adapted and filled out in every discreet context.
- **Qualitative and Quantitative:** The emergent consensus noted in the paper is expressed in qualitative language. It needs an appropriate mediation into relevant forms of quantitative analysis.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Advancing *Shared Well-Being*
by Preventing and Transforming
Violent Conflicts



Executive Summary

OVERVIEW

Violent conflict, including wars and terrorist attacks, is the most obvious expression of hostility and intolerance in our world today. In many countries and regions, inequality, exploitation and oppression are also prevalent. These conditions can also be understood as “structural” violence and conflict and can be equally as devastating for many people. The purpose of this Commission Paper is to help *Religions for Peace* members and affiliates:

- Identify the types of violent and structural conflict that are evident in their own contexts;
- Consider what religious resources are available to address these problems;
- Decide on the actions, resources and partners required to transform the conflict(s).

STEP 1: ANALYZING YOUR CONTEXT

In order to positively transform any type of conflict, we need to understand the nature and causes of that conflict. However, due to the complexity of many conflicts, this is not a straightforward process. A simple way to better understand the conflicts in your context is to examine three different elements in detail. Collect as much information as possible about:

- **Actors** – Who is involved in the conflict (directly and indirectly), and what is their relationship to one another?
- **Connectors and dividers** – What issues connect actors in the conflict, and what are the issues that divide?
- **Drivers of conflict/drivers of peace** – How are the actors using the dividers and connectors to drive the conflict or bring about peace?¹

Remember: the reasons for the start and continuation of the conflict are usually highly complex and can change over time. Also understandings of the cause of conflict are often different depending on those with whom you talk. Therefore, it is vital to consult as many different perspectives as possible. Do not be tempted to try and simplify the causes of conflict; the more multifaceted the understanding of a conflict, the better.

STEP 2: CONSIDERING RELIGIONS' ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

It is important in religious peacebuilding to not simply assume what might work, but to identify the best activities and methods through a systematic approach. One way to do this is to think about religion as encompassing five interrelated dimensions, and to carefully consider the peacebuilding potential of each in turn.²

Religion as a Set of Ideas – What religious sacred teachings, doctrines and narratives can be called on to support tolerance and nonviolence, and prevent and/or transform conflict?

Religion as a Community – How can the collective power of a religious community be used to reinforce group identity and strengthen peacebuilding efforts?

Religion as an Institution – How can religious institutions' authority and resources be used to positively support peacebuilding activities and initiatives? For example, consider the power and influence possessed by male, female and youth leaders; and resources such as funding, labor, communication and media networks, transportation and logistical support.

Religion as a Set of Symbols and Practices – What religious rituals and symbols can be used to promote and support efforts to prevent conflict and build lasting peace?

Religion as a Spirituality – How do the feelings of connection and transcendence that characterize many forms of religious experience inform the ways religious adherents think about peace and conflict?

When considering these religious resources, it is also helpful to think about them in relation to the four different levels at which conflict transformation needs to take place:

- Cultivating the personal skills we need to deal positively with conflict;
- Building respectful and kind relationships across society;
- Changing systems that perpetuate inequality, divisions and conflict;
- Identifying and changing the norms, ethics and morals in a society that initially led to seeing inequalities and injustices as an acceptable part of life.

Once you have identified some possible avenues for intervention, it is important to test your assumptions by interrogating your/each other's ideas in your consultation group/meeting, and working through the logic of the presumed impact of your ideas.

STEP 3: MOBILIZING ACTORS FOR PEACEBUILDING

Building on the understandings of conflict and peacebuilding possibilities you arrived at from Steps 1 and 2, Step 3 is about identifying the actors, resources and partners required to implement your peacebuilding plans. Resources required usually include personnel, funding, capacity building and a skills audit.

As members of *Religions for Peace*, we are extremely fortunate to be part of an organization that has over many years built an extensive network of religious actors working tirelessly for peace at global, regional, national and local levels. Many *Religions for Peace* members have significant influence within their own networks and/or hierarchies, and with governments, international and multinational institutions and peacebuilding organizations.

Essential elements of the *Religions for Peace* network are the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network and the Global Interfaith Youth Network. It is imperative that women and youth are included at all stages of understanding and transforming conflict, and have clearly defined roles.

It is highly unlikely that religious actors can implement and manage the complex and long-term processes involved in conflict transformation alone. Other important stakeholders might include religious organizations,

secular peacebuilders, and local, national and international institutions and organizations. After identifying what you need to do, carry out a skills and resources assessment of your community/organization. Ask: What gaps do you have, and are there other organizations that can help address these? How might your organization or institution benefit from this partnership? How might the partnership enhance the impact of your peacebuilding work? What are the possible challenges that partnerships can bring?

CONCLUSION

The *Religions for Peace* World Assembly is an immensely important opportunity for *Religions for Peace* members to work together to identify and address the drivers of violent and structural conflict in their own countries and contexts, and to plan for future work for the enhancement of peace, stability, and harmony across the globe.

Your contributions to these worldwide consultations are valued and important for understanding the challenges faced by religious actors across the world today, and for informing *Religions for Peace's* strategic direction and priorities in the coming years.

Introduction

Violent conflict, including wars and terrorist attacks, is arguably the most obvious expression of hostility, intolerance and disharmony in our world today. However, in many countries and regions, widespread and acute inequalities, exploitation and oppression are equally as destructive and devastating for many people, and can also be understood as “structural” forms of conflict and violence.

This Commission Paper is concerned with helping *Religions for Peace* members and affiliates to identify the types of conflict evident in their own contexts at local, national and regional levels, and to consider ways of addressing these challenges in collaboration with other faith groups, peacebuilding organizations and relevant stakeholders.

The Paper begins with important background information that can help introduce the topic during consultation meetings that will take place at national and regional levels in preparation for the World Assembly 2019. It then goes on to offer practical methods and guidance for analyzing your own context, and identifying the most relevant religious assets for addressing the conflicts and challenges in your context.

This Commission Paper will suggest that fundamental to positively transforming all conflicts is a systematic and comprehensive understanding of the conflict, linked with a careful and realistic assessment of what religious resources are available and likely to be effective given competing challenges and influences on the conflict.

Consequently, this Commission Paper is composed of three sections:

- I. Analyzing Your Context** – Guiding you in developing a shared understanding of the problems and drivers of structural and physical violence in your particular context;
- II. Religion, Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation** – Ways to consider what religious resources are available to you and most relevant to the problems you want to address;
- III. Mobilizing Actors for Peacebuilding** – Consideration of actions, resources and partners required for helping transform conflict in your context, and how best to engage them.

I. Analyzing Your Context

The first section of this Commission Paper offers background information on contemporary conflict, including religions' roles in driving conflict, and a simple but effective way to systematically understand the problems and challenges in your own context.

THE NATURE AND CAUSES OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT

It is perhaps self-evident that in order to positively transform any type of conflict, we need to comprehensively understand the nature and causes of that conflict. The logic is simple and used in many other areas of life: the better you understand something, the more likely you are to successfully and positively engage with it. As we shall see below, however, conflicts are rarely straightforward, and a multitude of factors need to be considered.

Useful Terms³

Attempting to systematically understand a conflict is called **conflict analysis**. This process is often guided by a framework of key questions, or a range of “conflict analysis tools,” which help identify who is involved in the conflict and their relationships with each other, what issues are at stake and how the conflict is being sustained.

Some other useful terms used in this Commission Paper:

Actor – Used to refer to a party at any level involved in a conflict or peacebuilding process. This could be an individual, organization, armed group or even a state institution or multinational body.

Conflict transformation – Sees conflict as an inevitable part of the human condition, which, if handled in the correct way, can be a positive and transformative process. In order for this to occur, the right structures and conditions need to be in place. These include a culture of nonviolence, and the personal and institutional skills and processes needed to manage conflict in a positive, constructive and nonviolent way. Conflict transformation is also focused on addressing the deep underlying causes of a conflict, as well as the more obvious negative effects and outcomes of conflict.

Peacebuilding – Originally conceived in terms of post-conflict recovery efforts to promote reconciliation and reconstruction, it may also include providing humanitarian relief, protecting human rights, ensuring security, establishing nonviolent modes of resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, providing trauma healing services, repatriating refugees and resettling internally displaced persons, supporting broad-based education and aiding in economic reconstruction. In this expanded meaning, it also includes conflict prevention in the sense of preventing the recurrence of violence, as well as conflict management and post-conflict recovery. In a larger sense, peacebuilding involves a transformation toward more manageable, peaceful relationships and governance structures—the long-term process of addressing root causes and effects, reconciling differences, normalizing relations, and building institutions that can manage conflict without resorting to violence.⁴

Positive and negative peace – Oppression, discrimination and inequality—even without explicit physical violence—are still forms of structural conflict and violence; this condition is often called “negative peace”. Alternatively, “positive peace” is a process and condition that advocates a just and fair society for all and the restoration of relationships after conflict. The Institute for Economics and Peace defines positive peace as the “attitudes, institutions and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies.”⁵

Structural violence/conflict – This is systematic injustice or inequality within a society or community, such as racism, ageism, classism, sexism, etc., which may or may not lead to physical violence.

Conflict Trends

It will perhaps come as no surprise that the prevalent types of conflict have changed significantly in the last few decades. Some of the most prominent trends include:

- Interstate conflicts (between nation states) have declined.
- Intrastate conflicts and civil wars (within nation states) have increased.
- The involvement of non-state actors (terrorist groups, militia, private armies, etc.) in conflict has increased.
- Conflict is more internationalized, with greater numbers of external countries becoming directly or indirectly involved in intrastate conflicts.
- Armed conflict maims or kills more civilians and non-combatants than armed fighters.

Conflict Theories

Many attempts have been made to come up with overarching theories and explanations for why different types of conflict occur. Some examples include:

- **Greed** – Actors enter into conflict for profit or material gain.
- **Grievance** – Actors enter into conflict because they are aggrieved at some form of injustice or inequality.
- **Ethnic/religious conflict** – Differences and discord in ethnic and religious identities and cultures drive inter-group conflicts.
- **Resource conflict** – Increasingly, a lack of access to natural resources drives tensions and structural and violent conflict.

Many other factors have also been identified as increasing or decreasing the likelihood of conflict. These include: the form and structure of governance; effectiveness of state security; average age of population; history of past conflicts; conflicts in bordering countries; and even geography—whether a country is mountainous or heavily forested.

In relation to religious involvement in conflict, these factors have been recognized as problematic:

- **Religious nationalism** and the negative effect religious leaders or institutions can have if seen to support state oppression and injustice, or vice versa.
- The negative impact of **religious identity** if used to emphasize divisions and differences in communities and societies.

- **Religious extremism and fundamentalism**, which can lead to religious interpretations that can be used to denigrate co-religionists or those from other faiths, and be used as a justification for persecution and violence.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS

In many cases of violence and conflict, both physical and structural, any number of the above factors may be influencing and sustaining the conflict. As a result it is imperative to undertake a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the nature and causes of conflict.

When attempting to analyze a conflict, we can be relatively confident in assuming two things:

- The reasons for the start and continuation of the conflict are usually highly complex and can change over time.
- Understanding of the cause of conflict is often different depending on the level of analysis (e.g. regional, national, local), and with whom you talk.

Given these two statements, it is important to carry out a **participative and inclusive assessment** in order to understand the conflict fully:

- **Participative:** Where possible, getting actors involved in collecting information means they will care about the process. A highly participative process can be a peacebuilding tool in itself.⁶
- **Inclusive:** Conflict analysis is strengthened by listening to as many different perspectives as possible. Include inputs from a diverse range of actors (religious and non-religious), participants and organizations.

Lastly, do not be tempted to try and simplify the causes of conflict; the more multifaceted the understanding of a conflict, the better.

Analyzing your Conflict/Context

Many organizations and actors have devised different ways of analyzing conflicts, often called Conflict Assessment Frameworks (CAFs). Matthew Levinger⁷ suggests that, despite the range of approaches, there are three key elements to most conflicts that must be examined:

1. **Actors** – Who is involved in the conflict (directly and indirectly), and what is their relationship to one another?
2. **Connectors and dividers** – What issues connect actors in the conflict, and what are the issues that divide? It is important to note that not all connectors are positive (e.g. gender-based violence), and not all dividers are negative.
3. **Drivers of conflict/drivers of peace** – How are the **actors** using the **dividers and connectors** to drive the conflict or bring about peace? For example, one side may be using religious identity to divide communities and incite violence, or a peacebuilding organization may be working with religious leaders to draw on religious scripture and ritual to bring about community reconciliation after violent conflict.

The way the analysis works is illustrated in the table below. This is an example from a conflict analysis workshop addressing intergenerational tensions over participation in a local youth project.

ACTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Young people ■ Parents ■ School teachers ■ Youth worker 	
DIVIDERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Age ■ Tradition of respect for elders ■ Ideas about young people's responsibilities ■ The importance of the youth project 	CONNECTORS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Family ■ Religion ■ What's best for young people ■ Tradition ■ Culture
DRIVERS OF CONFLICT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of traditional ideas and practices to try and control young people ■ Ideas about human rights to oppose traditional ways of life ■ Young people's unwillingness to understand and respect traditional ways and their elders ■ Social media and unrealistic ideas about what young people should be doing 	DRIVERS OF PEACE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of traditional methods of mediation and dialogue to help resolve differences and bring family back together ■ Role of youth worker to explain to parents the benefits of participating in the youth project

TASK 1

Use the blank Conflict Analysis Table on the next page to identify the actors, dividers and connectors, and drivers of peace and conflict in your own context. Remember the principles of participation and inclusivity – and ideally the analysis should represent as many different perspectives on the conflict as possible.

This can be done in small groups and brought back to a plenary for discussion, or as one larger working group. The process is not about reaching a consensus, but about recognizing as many different ideas and understandings as possible.

Conflict Analysis Table:

Use this table to work in groups to help understand the issues and challenges in your own context.

ACTORS	
DIVIDERS	CONNECTORS
DRIVERS OF CONFLICT	DRIVERS OF PEACE

II: Religion, Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation

RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING THEORY

Most of the current theoretical ideas about religious involvement in peacebuilding can trace their roots to Scott Appleby's publication *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (2000).

In his book, Appleby states something that most religious and non-religious people intuitively know: depending on a range of different factors and circumstances, religion can be used either to drive conflict or as a powerful and effective tool for peace.

Appleby and others⁸ have recognized several influential factors that help ensure religion manifests as a force for peace. These include:

- **Religious leadership** – In many religions, religious leaders are highly respected and trusted by their followers and communities. They are often seen as custodians and interpreters of sacred texts and practices, and as a result religious adherents may listen carefully to what they say and act upon it. Religious leaders may also have the respect of high-level secular and political leaders. As a consequence, positive and peaceful interpretations of a religion by leaders can make them an extremely effective force for peacebuilding.⁹
- **Religious education/formation** – Religious adherents who are well educated in their own religious traditions are purportedly less likely to be influenced by negative interpretations of religion and incitement to violence. They are more likely to offer strong religiously inspired counter-narratives against violence and extremism, and to be powerful peacebuilding allies.
- **Religious peacebuilders** – It has been convincingly argued (by *Religions for Peace* amongst others) that religious actors are most effective as peacebuilders when they remain religious as they promote peace, rather than being simply another group co-opted to support “secular” peacebuilding projects and initiatives.¹⁰ It is the religious ideas and inspiration that make religious peacebuilders different, and often more effective. This will be discussed further on pages 42–43 when exploring the five different dimensions of religion to consider when thinking about your peacebuilding activities.

RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING IN PRACTICE

In practical terms, peacebuilding work that engages with religious actors, or attempts to draw on the influence and/or resources of religion to support and enhance conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, has increased significantly in the last few years.

Religious leaders are often engaged directly by peacebuilding actors and encouraged to leverage their authority and influence to support peacebuilding and/or to promote peaceful interpretations of religious scriptures and beliefs to support peace.

Religious institutions and faith-based organizations are also seen as important and influential, and are increasingly engaged by non-faith-based organizations in peacebuilding initiatives as they are often seen as gatekeepers to religious communities and leaders, as understanding religious traditions and motivations and as having trust and respect.

At the grassroots and community level, religious identity and beliefs can help bring people together around a common purpose and understanding, and be a powerful asset for peacebuilding work.

CASE STUDY

Bosnia

Following the Dayton Accords, the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina (IRC-BiH) worked with the conflicting parties, civil society and government to begin the reconciliation process and build an inclusive and pluralist state. IRC-BiH facilitated communications across religious communities, served as a liaison between the religious communities and the many international NGOs working in the post-conflict environment, and provided a venue for regular engagements with the government. Over time, the IRC's working committees also addressed issues of security and economic development. Among other outcomes, the IRC-BiH advocated for religious freedom and helped to draft the national law on civil society organizations, which eventually passed in 2004 as part of the country's reconstruction.

THE ADDED VALUE OF MULTI-RELIGIOUS COOPERATION

“Multi-religious cooperation for peace is the hallmark of Religions for Peace.”

Religions for Peace is founded on the belief that different religions working together on a common issue are often more effective than religious groups and communities working alone. Religions working together can help:

- Deepen understanding of each other as religious people and individuals, challenging and breaking down negative stereotypes that have been brought about through ignorance and fear;

- Bring different groups in diverse communities together around common issues and challenges, creating strong bonds of solidarity and respect;
- Serve to identify and highlight complementary strengths, making multi-religious groups greater than the sum of their parts;
- Offer efficiencies by pooling resources and strengthening collaboration.

CASE STUDY

Sierra Leone

From the beginning of the crisis in Sierra Leone, the *Religions for Peace* Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) successfully facilitated communication among various rebel factions, contributing to the rebels' ability to serve as viable parties to the peace process. The IRCSL represented a unified voice of collaboration among the nation's religious communities, which led directly to the conflict's resolution and helped keep society from fracturing. *Religions for Peace's* vital role during the peace negotiation prepared the IRCSL delegation to be a powerful force for post-conflict peacebuilding, which resulted in a long-term commitment to building civil society in the nation.

CONSIDERING THE RELIGIOUS ASSETS IN YOUR CONTEXT

We know that religions can play an important function in helping to prevent and transform conflicts at all levels. There are many excellent examples of religious peacebuilders and communities playing a multitude of important roles in peacebuilding, from high-level diplomatic negotiation and mediation, to grassroots community reconciliation initiatives.¹¹

However, despite the rich resources and influence religions often possess, there are also numerous examples where religion has not been as effective in preventing and/or transforming conflict as would be hoped. Why is this?

One reason is that sometimes religious peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts are devised arbitrarily, and not as the direct result of a careful and systematic analysis and understanding of conflict. It is important in religious peacebuilding not simply to assume what might work, and/or what religious assets are important, but to identify the best approaches and methods through a systematic approach.

The United States Institute of Peace, in collaboration with the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers and the Salam Institute for Peace and Justice, has recently developed a *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide* for this type of work.¹² The next part of this Commission Paper draws on some of the ideas in this publication.

THE FIVE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS PEACEBUILDING¹³

Religion has long been associated with having the power, ability and resources to prevent and transform conflict. In order to systematically consider which religious assets might be most appropriate and effective in addressing a conflict, it may be helpful to think about religion as encompassing five interrelated dimensions:

Religion as a Set of Ideas

Religious sacred teachings, doctrines and narratives can be a call to action for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, a moral reference in support of tolerance and nonviolence, and a source of ideas and tools for resolving conflict. This dimension can be particularly powerful when parties to a conflict are from the same religious (or non-religious) tradition and thus share norms, values and culture, in which case the actors are more likely to agree on what a conflict resolution process should look like and the reasons why violence is not desirable.

When actors are from different traditions, drawing on scripture and religious teachings can still be a hugely valuable approach as many religious traditions share common values and ideas. Every religion and culture has its own strategies for resolving conflict, and these should be used wherever possible—although it is important to be aware that there may be some limits to how religious ideas and beliefs about peacebuilding transfer across religious and cultural landscapes.

CASE STUDY

Religion and Genocide Prevention

Beginning in 2015, the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect organized the “Fez Process” with support from the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID), the World Council of Churches and the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. It consisted of a series of global consultations on the prevention of incitement that could lead to atrocity crimes. More than two hundred religious actors from over seventy countries participated (including many *Religions for Peace* members), representing religious traditions, denominations, and minorities—and at least thirty percent of the participants were women. The outcome was an extensive plan of action with detailed recommendations for religious actors, as well as state actors, civil society and media.

<http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan%20of%20Action%20Advanced%20Copy.pdf>

Religion as a Community

The tendency of religion to reinforce group identity can strengthen peacebuilding efforts. The collective power of a community working for peace can be greater than the individual efforts of its members. Their shared knowledge can help advance understanding of the problems and possible solutions. Their influence can make conflict actors reflect on their actions and increase participation in peacebuilding initiatives.

The evident danger of group identity is that it can lead to negative stereotypes. When religious identity is a factor in conflict, activities aimed at sharing knowledge about different groups' religious beliefs and practices can counteract rumors and misperceptions about the "other" and help prevent the build-up of tensions and violence. Communities that have strong religious identity but weak knowledge of their religion may be at greater risk for radicalization and violence. Religious actors can strengthen religious knowledge in such a way as to increase critical thinking and resistance to radical narratives that promote violence.

Religion as an Institution

Although they vary in influence and complexity, most religions have some form of institutional hierarchy and structure. Institutions give religious leaders legitimacy and authority, as well as material and human resources to carry out peacebuilding activities. Influential religious leaders associated with an institution may be scholars, practitioners and/or local congregants, some of whom will be women and young people—not just official high-level representatives.

Where relationships between different religious groups need to be strengthened, institutions can come together to form inter-religious associations – with *Religions for Peace* being an excellent example. These groups can model unity and respect, make joint statements, and take cooperative action to advance peace and harmony. That said, it is important to understand the differences and tensions between and within religious groups, which may be hidden for fear of upsetting relations or provoking retaliation.

Institutions can offer funding, labor, communication and media networks, transportation and logistics to support a wide range of activities. Do not ignore these important practical dimensions of peacebuilding.

Religion as a Set of Symbols and Practices

For some religious actors, what they do is as important as what they believe. The use of symbols and practices in peacebuilding is increasingly recognized as an important part of peacebuilding work.¹⁴ When conflicting beliefs make talking difficult, rituals and icons can serve as a language for connection and renewed understanding during and after conflict. If not used carefully, however, religious symbols and practices can be divisive as they are often closely tied to beliefs that may be challenging. However, there are many examples of new and adapted ritual practices used in a sensitive and inclusive way for inter-religious peacebuilding purposes.

Religion as a Spirituality

The spiritual dimension of religion refers to the feelings of connection and transcendence that distinguish rational thought from religious belief. Katrien Hertog argues that because of its spiritual dimension, religion is particularly relevant to many of the emotional processes that drive conflict or prevent a just and sustainable peace after conflict.¹⁵ She suggests that traditional approaches often ignore this so-called soft dimension of peacebuilding. Consider this argument in your planning. What soft dimensions, such as feelings of insecurity, has your analysis determined to be contributing to the conflict? Think of ways the spiritual dimension of religion can be a source of peacebuilding.

It is important to carefully consider all five dimensions when considering your involvement in a conflict prevention or peacebuilding process.

The Five Dimensions of Religion as Sources of Violence and Conflict

It is also important to remember when carrying out your analysis that all five dimensions can be and have been used to justify physical and structural violence and conflict. For example:

- Negative and distorted interpretations of **religious ideas and beliefs** have been used to justify terrorist acts and extremist ideologies by members of numerous religious traditions.
- **Communal identity** is often emphasised and used to create “in” and “out” groups, and perpetuate fear, hatred and division in societies and communities.
- Throughout history, **religious institutions** have been complicit in creating and sustaining inequality and oppression in societies, and within and between religious traditions.
- The oppression and/or attempted annihilation of another religious tradition or group usually involves the destruction or proscription of **religious symbolism**: for example, the demolition or appropriation of religious buildings and sacred sites, and prohibition of religious dress and ritual practice.
- A distorted and irreligious sense of **spirituality** and a belief in “doing God’s work” has often been used to motivate extremists and terrorists to commit violent atrocities.

CASE STUDY

Myanmar

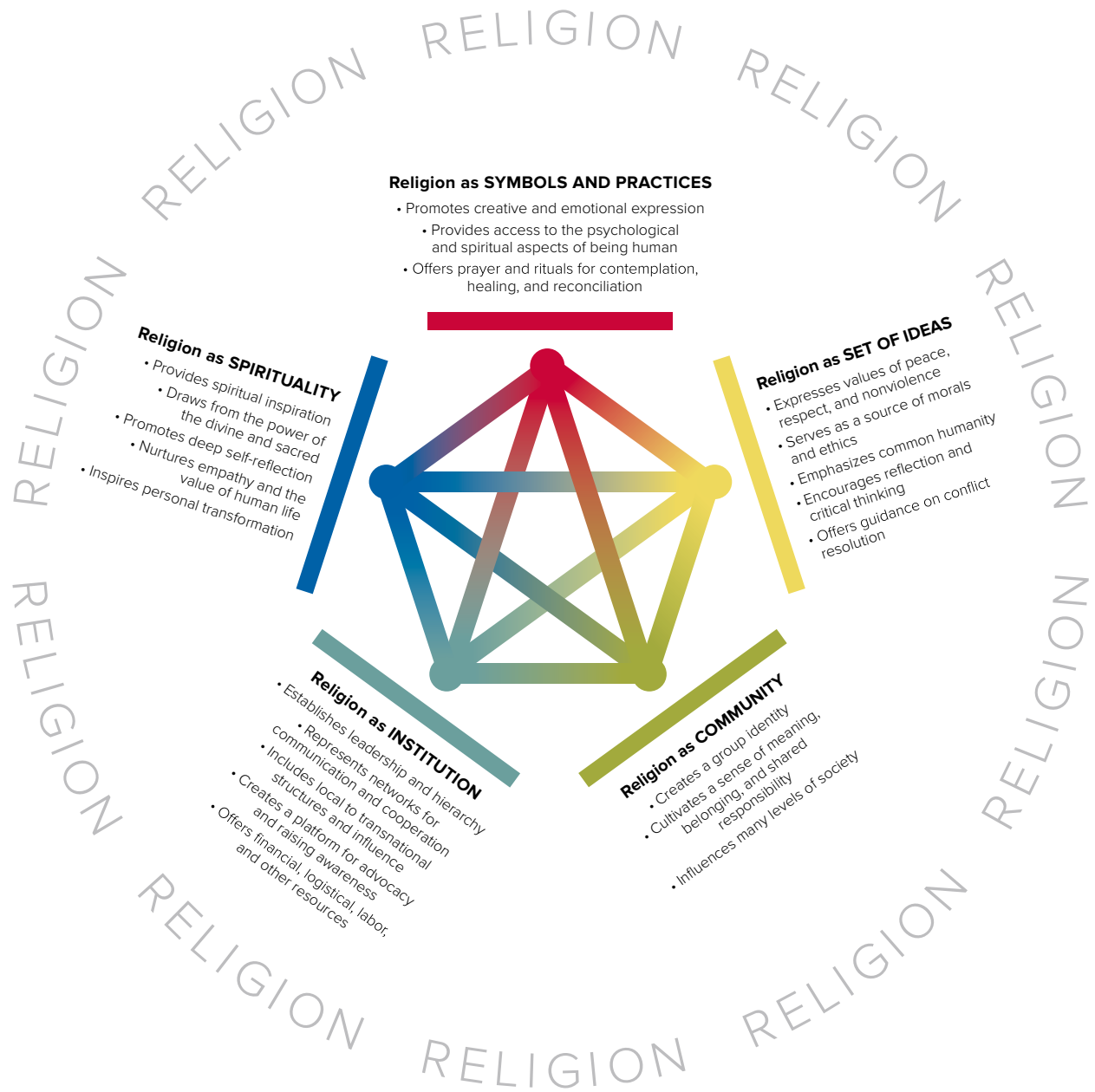
In Myanmar, *Religions for Peace* has developed a multilevel, multi-stakeholder approach to supporting efforts to end violent conflicts, including decades-long conflicts between the military and armed ethnic groups, and the deadly clashes between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims. At the diplomatic level, a high-level international delegation was invited by Cardinal Charles Bo, Archbishop of Yangon, and other members of *Religions for Peace* Myanmar, to visit the country and deliver the 'Letter to the Peoples of Myanmar' carrying a call for the establishment of the ***Religions for Peace Advisory Forum on National Reconciliation and Peace in Myanmar***.

The Advisory Forum brought together senior religious leaders, officials from the United Nations, the Myanmar government and the military, parliament and ethnic organizations. To respond to the critical lack of “open space” for dialogue and cooperation among all stakeholders, this program aims at building a unique multireligious and multi-stakeholder mechanism for dialogue and action. The government has publicly acknowledged the critical role religious leaders play in transforming people and conflict, and pledged to support future *Religions for Peace* work on dialogue and multi-religious cooperation.

At the grassroots level, a number of projects and programs have built the capacity of *Religions for Peace* Myanmar members, and supporting dialogue and multi-religious activities have deepened understanding and brought communities back together after violent conflict. Evaluation evidence has shown that the projects have had a profound and positive impact on many participants, especially women, and have helped build peace and reconciliation in the project areas.

<https://rfp.org/press-release-religions-for-peace-advisory-forum-provides-open-space-to-advance-national-reconciliation-and-peace-in-myanmar/>

An overview of the dimensions and applications of religious peacebuilding (taken from Frazer & Owen 2018)



FOUR LEVELS OF CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION¹⁶

When attempting to positively intervene and transform a conflict, it might be helpful to think about the four different levels at which conflict transformation needs to take place. Whilst comprehensive transformation and peacebuilding needs to address all four levels, this is an unrealistic expectation for most projects or initiatives. Therefore you might consider where your existing resources and assets can be most suitable for intervening, and which resources and/or skills you need to add.

LEVEL OF TRANSFORMATION	CHARACTERISTICS
Personal	Cultivating self-awareness and helpful responses to conflict. Developing personal communications skills and abilities to respond positively and constructively to conflict, and help transform conflict in a skillful and just way.
Relational	Building relations across all areas of society, enhancing lines of communication and trust. Respecting diversity and difference, and welcoming everyone as individuals worthy of respect and kindness.
Structural	Changing the societal systems that perpetuate inequalities such as racism, classism and sexism. Helping develop fair and just societal and institutional systems and equal opportunities for everyone in society.
Cultural	Identifying and changing the norms, ethics and morals in a society which initially led to structural inequalities. Challenging ideas and beliefs that inequalities and injustices are an acceptable part of life, and advocating for change.

RELIGION AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

Combining these two concepts can offer a systematic approach to identifying how religious actors and resources can tackle the underlying causes of conflict identified in Section I.



TASK 2

Work through the Religion and Conflict Transformation Table on the following page, carefully thinking about the challenges, which levels need transformation, and which of the five dimensions of religion are relevant to each in your particular context.

Be as specific as possible when filling in. For example, identify specific religious leaders to carry out tasks or specific religious scriptures that might address reconciliation. The more detailed the table, the more useful it will be for informing a practical project/initiative.

Develop one table for each of the conflict drivers you think most relevant, or you are best placed to address. As with task 1, this can be done in smaller groups or as part of a larger group discussion.

Religion and Conflict Transformation Table

CONFLICT DRIVER/ PROBLEM	(Write conflict driver here...)			
	PERSONAL	RELATIONAL	STRUCTURAL	CULTURAL
IDEAS (sacred teachings, doctrines, ethics, morals and values)				
COMMUNITY (group resources and support)				
INSTITUTION (formal structures, leaders and organizations)				
SYMBOLS AND PRACTICES (lived visible manifestations of religion)				
SPIRITUALITY (sense of connectedness to the divine)				

TESTING YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Now that you have identified some possible avenues for intervention, it is important to test your assumptions by taking into account broader issues and competing pressures in your context. A simple way of doing this is by interrogating your/each other's ideas in your consultation group/meeting, and working through the logic of the presumed impact of your ideas. For each assumption in your project ask yourself:

“If I do **x** is **y** really likely to happen?”

For example, if religious leaders identify and disseminate texts on reconciliation, will this bring the conflict actors back together after conflict?

If the answer is no, or you are not sure, then you may need to think about your ideas more carefully.

When doing this, it is also important consider the competing influences and pressures on religious leaders, communities and organizations in relation to conflict and peacebuilding.

For example, whilst an idea or initiative might seem reasonable and self-evident, are there legal or political pressures, or risks for religious actors becoming involved in a peacebuilding process? Does ethnic identity trump religious affiliation in this particular conflict, meaning that religion may not be as influential as might be hoped? Has religious identity been amongst the drivers of conflict, and therefore are actors likely to respond positively to further involvement at this point in time?

It is imperative to be self-analytical and honest about the likely impact of your ideas – if not, you will likely embark on a project or initiative which will have much less impact than desired, and waste precious resources.

RELIGIOUS ASSETS FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Since its inception, *Religions for Peace* has recognized and worked tirelessly to reduce the catastrophic threat to the planet brought about by nuclear weapons. The hugely impressive *Religions for Peace* youth initiative Arms Down! collected over 20 million signatures supporting the abolition of nuclear weapons from 140 countries, and was recognized by H.E. Mr. Sergio de Queiroz Duarte, the United Nations Secretary-General's High Representative for Disarmament. *Religions for Peace* is also very proud to be an international partner of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which won the Nobel Peace Prize for its work in 2017.

For the purposes of this Commission Paper, nuclear weapons and disarmament can be perceived, analyzed and addressed in ways similar to those for any other structural and societal conflicts. Use the Conflict Analysis Table to consider the main challenges in your context in relation to nuclear disarmament, and use the Religion and Conflict Transformation Table to consider the main areas of transformation you can realistically engage in with your available resources, and—if resources are not currently available—what you need and how you will get it.

CASE STUDY

Nuclear Disarmament

Religions for Peace has consistently challenged the moral legitimacy of security strategies that rely on the use or threat of nuclear weapons. With one voice, spoken from our various traditions of faith, we have worked in unity to raise awareness among people and advocate to governments that nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction are immoral and criminal, and that stockpiling such weapons with the intent or threat to use them erodes the very foundation of moral civilization.

III: Mobilizing Actors for Peacebuilding

Ideally, peacebuilding would take place at the local, national, regional and global levels simultaneously, in a coordinated and interconnected program. However, this scale of peacebuilding is often beyond the capacity of most actors and initiatives, and building just and sustainable peace is usually more of an accumulation of smaller incremental projects and initiatives.

Building on the understandings of conflict and peacebuilding you have gained from Sections I and II, Section III of this Commission Paper concerns itself with identifying the actors, resources and partners required to actualize and implement your peacebuilding plans.

Resource Identification

In order to put a peacebuilding initiative into action, you will need to identify where the resources will come from. Resources usually include personnel, funding, knowledge and expertise, skills and capacity and partners or stakeholders. Filling in the Resource Identification Table below might help you to clarify what resources are needed for your peacebuilding plans.

PROJECT ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES		
	Existing	Required
PERSONNEL		
FUNDING		
KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE		
SKILLS AND CAPACITY		
PARTNERS/ STAKEHOLDERS		

DRAWING ON THE *RELIGIONS FOR PEACE* GLOBAL NETWORK

Religions for Peace has over many years built an extensive global network of religious actors working tirelessly for peace. *Religions for Peace* has organizations and affiliates at global, regional, national and local levels, with extensive reach into societies around the world. It also has a history of significant success in building multi-religious platforms for conflict prevention and transformation.

Religions for Peace also brings together members of the world's great religious traditions, many of which have their own networks and/or hierarchies that can be utilized and mobilized for conflict transformation and peacebuilding activities. In addition, many *Religions for Peace* members and organizations have existing relationships with governments, international and multinational institutions and peacebuilding organizations.

These relationships and networks mean that religious groups, and *Religions for Peace*, can have a substantial role in peacebuilding. Drawing on *Religions for Peace* networks can help create networks of peace across the world, and recruit and mobilize religious actors to help realize peacebuilding plans. Collaboration with affiliates from other countries and regions is a fundamental dimension of *Religions for Peace*'s work, is strongly encouraged at all levels, and is an important resource that should be considered as part of your peacebuilding efforts.

WOMEN AND YOUTH NETWORKS

Essential elements of the *Religions for Peace* network are the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network and the Global Interfaith Youth Network.

A “network of networks”, the *Religions for Peace* Global Women of Faith Network brings together diverse women of faith to promote their leadership, coordinate strategies and pool resources and capabilities for cooperative action for peace. The Global Women of Faith Network consists of more than 1000 religious women's organizations at the national and regional levels in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean and North America. Similarly, the Global Interfaith Youth Network, led by the International Youth Committee (IYC), is composed of regional committees and networks that bring together youth to confront some of our most urgent challenges— building peace, ending poverty and protecting the Earth.

It is well documented that women and youth are often disproportionately affected by conflict, and their experiences of violence and conflict differ in many ways to those of men. There is also increasing evidence that women and youth play very specific and important roles in peacebuilding processes.¹⁷

Therefore it is imperative that in understanding and transforming conflict, the voices and perspectives of women and youth are prominent in the conflict analysis process. More desirably, if the context and culture allows, women and youth should have central and clearly defined roles in all peacebuilding efforts.

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP

Despite the significant influence and resources possessed by religious actors in many contexts, it is highly unlikely that religious actors can implement and manage the complex and long-term processes involved in conflict transformation alone.

Furthermore, no person is “just religious;” individual and group identities are complex, and in situations of conflict those identities are often affected by a range of competing religious, social, economic, political and personal factors and pressures. As a result, a multifaceted and multi-stakeholder approach is usually required for sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation.

A multi-stakeholder approach has been shown to enhance effectiveness through the sharing of knowledge and resources, avoiding duplication of efforts, enhancing networks and contacts, training and capacity building and modelling cooperation and friendship, amongst other things. Other stakeholders might include religious organizations; secular peacebuilders; and local, national and international institutions and organizations.

Creating effective partnerships requires careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of your own and other organizations. The Resource Identification Table should have helped you identify the gaps and needs you might want a partner organization to help address.

The following questions may also be useful when trying to consider which partners might be most appropriate to work with:

- What is the mission of the agency or organization? Does it align with the mission of your own congregation/institution/peacebuilding plans?
- Has the organization worked collaboratively with other organizations in the past? If so, how did they get on and how might multi-religious collaboration be different?
- Does the organization have the necessary resources/skills/expertise required to help address the problems you have identified? If so, what are they?
- Specifically how might your organization or institution benefit from this partnership?
- What are the possible challenges that can be anticipated?¹⁸

Considering these questions should help you identify appropriate partners with which you can form strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial relations. Non-religious and institutional peacebuilders are increasingly looking for religious actors to fulfill donors’ funding criteria, so it is important to be sure that potential partners are not looking merely to instrumentalize your religious identity or assets, but will treat you as a full and respected partner, and respect your religious traditions, ideas and beliefs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The *Religions for Peace* World Assembly is an immensely important opportunity for *Religions for Peace* members to work together to identify and address the drivers of violent and structural conflict in their own countries and contexts, and to plan for future efforts to work for the enhancement of peace, stability and harmony across the globe.

Experience and evidence show that conflict can only be prevented and transformed when the causes are fully understood, interventions are tailored to the specific context and meticulously planned and approaches are multifaceted and supported by a variety of stakeholders.

Religious actors and assets can often play a significant role in transforming conflict and helping bring communities and societies back together after violent conflict, and in addressing structural discrimination and oppression. However, it is important that the leveraging of religious assets, and the mobilization of religious actors, is informed by careful consideration and planning.

This Commission Paper has hopefully helped you in this process. Guided by the three sections in this Paper, you are hopefully in a position to prepare an informed and succinct report to be received at the regional and international levels. It might comprise:

- A brief introduction to your country/context;
- Drivers of conflict and peace and your main challenges/strategic priorities;
- Your most relevant religious strengths/assets for addressing conflict;
- A brief assessment of resources, both existing and required;
- A summary.

Please be assured that your contributions to these worldwide consultations are valued and important for our understanding of the challenges faced by religious actors across the world, and for informing *Religions for Peace's* strategic direction and priorities in the coming years.

Bibliography

- Abu-Nimer, Mohammed. *Nonviolence and Peacebuilding in Islam: Theory and Practice*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003.
- Anderson, Mary. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999.
- Appleby, R. Scott. *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- Avruch, Kevin. *Culture and Conflict Resolution*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002.
- Berg Harpviken, Kristian, and Hanne Eggen Roisilien. “Mapping the Terrain: The Role of Religion in Peacemaking.” Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, July 2005.
- Coward, Harold, and Gordon Smith, eds. *Religion and Peacebuilding*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.
- Daniel, P., and S. Timothy. *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.
- Dupuy, Kendra, and Siri Aas Rustad. “Trends in Armed Conflict, 1946–2017”. *PRIO Policy Brief*. Oslo: Peace Research Institute Oslo, 2018. <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=1373&type=publicationfile>.
- Fisher, S., et. al. *Working with Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Actions*. London: Zed, 2000.
- Fox, Jonathan. *Ethnoreligious Conflict in the Late Twentieth Century: A General Theory*. Oxford: Lexington, 2002.
- Frazer, Owen, and Richard Friedli. *Approaching Religion in Conflict Transformation: Concepts, Cases, and Practical Implications*. Zurich: Center for Security Studies, 2015.
- Frazer, Owen and Mark Owen. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2018.
- Gopin, Marc. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence, and Peacemaking*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Gopin, Marc. *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, 128 | Bibliography.
- Hassner, Ron E. “‘To Halve and to Hold’: Conflicts over Sacred Space and the Problem of Indivisibility.” *Security Studies* 12, no.4 (2003): 1–33.
- Hayward, Susan, and Katherine Marshall. *Women, Religion, Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2015.
- Hertog, Katrien. *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding: Conceptual Contributions and Critical Analysis*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010.
- IEP BRIEF. *Positive Peace: The Lens to Achieve the Sustaining Peace Agenda*. Institute for Economics and Peace, 2016, 2.
- Johnston, Douglas, and Cynthia Sampson, eds. *Religion: The Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark, and Margo Kitt, eds. *Princeton Readings in Religion and Violence*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Lederach, John Paul. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

- Levinger, Matthew. *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2013.
- Little, David. *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Marsden, Lee, ed. *The Ashgate Research Companion to Religion and Conflict Resolution*. Oxford: Routledge, 2016.
- Mason, Simon J. A., and Damiano A. Sguaitamatti. "Religion in Conflict Transformation". *Politorbis* 52 (2011). www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/Politorbis-52.pdf.
- Mitchell, Claire. *Religion, Identity and Politics in Northern Ireland: Boundaries of Belonging and Belief*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006.
- Omer, Atalia, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds. *Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Schirch, Lisa. *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2013.
- Schirch, Lisa. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian, 2005.
- Snodderly, Dan, ed. *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2011. www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary.
- Svensson, Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolution in Civil Wars*. Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2012.
- Turay, T. M. "Civil Society and Peacebuilding: The Role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone." *Accord* 9 (2000): 50–53.
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID). *Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding: An Introductory Programming Guide*. Washington, DC: USAID, 2009. http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pnadr501.pdf.
- Watts, Stephen, Jennifer Kavanagh, Bryan Frederick, Tova C. Norlen, Angela O'Mahony, Phoenix Voorhies, and Thomas S. Szayna. *Understanding Conflict Trends: A Review of the Social Science Literature on the Causes of Conflict*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1063z1.html.
- Woodhead, Linda. "Five Concepts of Religion". *International Review of Sociology* 21 (2011): 121–243.
- Woodrow, Peter, Nick Oatley, and Michelle Garred. "Faith Matters: A Guide for the Design, Monitoring and Evaluation of Inter-Religious Peacebuilding". CDA Collaborative Learning Projects and Alliance for Peacebuilding, September 2017.

Endnotes

- 1 Taken from Levinger, M. *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions*. United States Institute of Peace, 2013.
- 2 Taken from Frazer, O. & Owen, M. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace, 2018.
- 3 Many of these definitions are adapted from Snodderly, D. (ed.) *Peace Terms: Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding*. United States Institute of Peace, 2011. www.usip.org/publications/usip-peace-terms-glossary.
- 4 Frazer, O. & Owen, M. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace, 2018.
- 5 IEP BRIEF. *Positive Peace: The Lens to Achieve the Sustaining Peace Agenda*. Institute for Economics and Peace: 2016, 2.
- 6 These definitions are taken from Frazer, O. & Owen, M. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace, 2018, 16-17.
- 7 Levinger, M. *Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions*. United States Institute of Peace, 2013.
- 8 See, for example, Johnston, D. & Sampson, C. 1995; Gopin, M. 2002; Coward, H. & Smith, G. 2004; Little, D. 2007; Hertog, K. 2010.
- 9 See also Lederach, J. P. 1997; Gopin, M. 2000; Hertog, K. 2010.
- 10 See also Brearley, K. *Neither Problem nor Panacea. Understanding the Role of Religion in Peacebuilding: A Report for Cord*. University of Winchester, 2018.
- 11 For more information about potential roles of religious peacebuilders, see Sampson, C., "Religion and Peacebuilding". In *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, Zartman, I. W. & Rasmussen, J. L. (eds). United States Institute of Peace, 1997, 273-315.
- 12 Frazer, O. & Owen, M. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace, 2018. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/USIP_Religion-in-Conflict-Peacebuilding_Analysis-Guide.pdf.
- 13 Frazer, O. & Owen, M. *Religion in Conflict and Peacebuilding: Analysis Guide*. United States Institute of Peace, 2018.
- 14 Schirch, L. *Conflict Assessment and Peacebuilding Planning: Toward a Participatory Approach to Human Security*. Kumarian, 2013.
- 15 Hertog, K. *The Complex Reality of Religious Peacebuilding*. Lexington Books, 2010.
- 16 This is an adapted version of John Paul Lederach's four levels of conflict transformation, which first appeared in Lederach, J. P. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. United States Institute of Peace, 1997.
- 17 See for example Hayward, S. & Marshall, K. *Women, Religion, Peacebuilding: Illuminating the Unseen*. United States Institute of Peace, 2015.
- 18 Taken from Commission Paper "Caring for our Common Future by Protecting the Earth". GreenFaith, 2018.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Promoting Just and Harmonious Societies



Executive Summary

The shared ideal of just, harmonious and diverse societies can be attained, but polarized ideas and communities, partnered with the rapid change and inequities that accompany globalization, pose serious threats.

Wide-ranging challenges call for active inter-religious engagement to understand and address critical topics that divide societies.

Understanding how polarization and weakening trust in institutions affect religious communities is the foundation for constructive inter-religious action. Religious voices belong at the table in decision-making circles, but they are too little heard in global governance institutions. That can and should change. Identities and convictions can create or deepen rifts, but the ethos and experience of inter-religious bodies open countless opportunities to play uniting and healing roles. This is true from the most global to the most local and personal levels. The path forward can build on *Religions for Peace* Assembly ideals of “shared security” and “robust principled pluralism,” bolstered by a sharper focus on governance challenges, appreciation for the linked challenges of the “Five Ps” of sustainable development (peace, people, planet, prosperity and partnerships) and a constant focus on those left behind.

The *Religions for Peace* Commission on Just and Harmonious Societies will focus on the following challenges and questions:

TOPIC OF FOCUS	CENTRAL CHALLENGES	PROMISING APPROACHES	PATHS FORWARD
GOOD GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loss of trust in institutions ■ Embedded corruption ■ Painful transitions of government ■ Abuses of power that especially affect women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speaking truth to power ■ Capacity building ■ Election monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expand anti-corruption initiatives ■ Focus on supporting positive government transitions ■ Purposefully address domestic violence and other abuses of women
SECURITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weaknesses in rule of law ■ Gangs and crime ■ Devastating impact on the most vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engaging youth and women's programs ■ Analyses of aspirations and grievances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help to revamp Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) frameworks
MIGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tensions facing migrants in sending and receiving countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct support to migrants ■ Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pursue dialogue on new UN compacts
REFUGEES AND DISPLACED POPULATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large populations affected by conflicts ■ Humanitarian crises ■ Tensions around third-country resettlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct humanitarian support ■ Focus on education ■ Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy for longer-term solutions to protracted refugee situations ■ Dialogue on compact implementation

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF (FoRB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different understandings of FoRB focus and priorities ■ Violations of FoRB ■ Divisions between human rights and FoRB advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Common support for FoRB in situations of violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safe space discussions on sensitive topics, for example, proselytizing guidelines ■ Common action to address critical situations
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VIOLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hostilities to minority religious communities ■ Tensions around specific groups (including their traditions, family law and other aspects) ■ Social media fostering hate speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy ■ Support for community understanding ■ Addressing social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Map successful national dialogues ■ Support truth and reconciliation commissions ■ Expand action on hate speech
PEACE EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unclear religious roles in Sustainable Development Goals education ■ Need for religious literacy ■ Need to educate for conflict resolution and cultures of peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethics education ■ Workshops ■ Cultural approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share promising approaches and curricula ■ Build on cultural activities

Religious actors **can and must work across sectors**, marshalling their varied and powerful assets, to build fair and efficient governance systems that **respect human rights and promote robust forms of pluralism**. Different religious communities need to diagnose opportunities and ills and strengthen their approaches to partnership and action. Overcoming tendencies towards silos among religious communities and with other sectors, listening to others, working to bring forward the best experience and ideas and reaching out to many within religious communities (women and young people are leading examples) who traditionally sat at the margins are all vital steps forward.

Contemporary realities demand approaches that combine senior leadership (“**fire from above**”) with action at the local and community level (“**fire from below**”). Religious communities are called to work in complex partnerships, not only with other religious communities but with wide-ranging sectors: public and private; global, national and local. They can and must look to **religious assets that include spiritual and ethical teachings and practical on-the-ground positions within trusted communities**. Assets include distinctive opportunities to appreciate grievances and hopes that fuel tensions and to advance authentic, creative and practical dialogues for action. Traditions and approaches that elicit and act on compassion and heal trauma, the ancient gifts of religious communities, have never been so sorely needed.

The Commission needs to focus on practical dimensions of governance. Security concerns for many communities call for a revamped understanding of how to counter extremism and to support democratic values and institutions, with a deep appreciation for core human rights values that focus on equality of dignity, opportunity and recognition. The aim is to bring forward the best of religious ethics and experience, to achieve social justice. Working across different sectors and institutions, inter-religious action has real potential to heal divides and achieve humanity’s potential for equitable, diverse, thriving and peaceful societies.

I. Challenges and Questions: Inter-Religious Paths Towards Just and Harmonious Societies

The shared ideal of just, harmonious and diverse societies is attainable. However, polarized ideas and communities and the rapid changes and inequities that accompany globalization stand in the way. To respond and contribute with their formidable assets, religious actors can and must work across sectors to build fair and efficient governance systems that respect human rights and promote robust forms of pluralism. The central question is how to make that happen.

Religious voices belong at the table in decision-making circles at this time of challenges and crises of purpose and direction. Voices of religious communities are present but too little heard in global governance institutions, which play central parts in the era's most fundamental challenges. That can and should change. It will, however, happen only with concerted efforts by different religious communities to diagnose opportunities and ills and to strengthen their approaches to partnership and action. The question is where and how to achieve these ends.

Bringing religious voices to the decision-making table means overcoming tendencies towards silos within and among religious communities and with other sectors. It means listening to others and working to bring forward the best experience and ideas. It means reaching out to many within religious communities (women and young people are leading examples) who traditionally sat at the margins. And it means working with approaches that combine senior leadership ("fire from above") with action at the local and community level ("fire from below").

The chart below summarizes challenges and questions that are the focus of the *Religions for Peace* Commission on Just and Harmonious Societies:

TOPIC OF FOCUS	CENTRAL CHALLENGES	PROMISING APPROACHES	PATHS FORWARD
GOOD GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Loss of trust in institutions ■ Embedded corruption ■ Painful transitions of government ■ Abuses of power that especially affect women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Speaking truth to power ■ Capacity building ■ Election monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Expand anti-corruption initiatives ■ Focus on supporting positive government transitions ■ Purposefully address domestic violence and other abuses of women
SECURITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weaknesses in rule of law ■ Gangs and crime ■ Devastating impact on the most vulnerable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Engaging youth and women's programs ■ Analyses of aspirations and grievances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Help to revamp Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) frameworks
MIGRATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tensions facing migrants in sending and receiving countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct support to migrants ■ Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pursue dialogue on new UN compacts

REFUGEES AND DISPLACED POPULATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Large populations affected by conflicts ■ Humanitarian crises ■ Tensions around third-country resettlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Direct humanitarian support ■ Focus on education ■ Advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy for longer-term solutions to protracted refugee situations ■ Dialogue on compact implementation
FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF (FoRB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Different understandings of FoRB focus and priorities ■ Violations of FoRB ■ Divisions between human rights and FoRB advocates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Common support for FoRB in situations of violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safe space discussions on sensitive topics, for example, proselytizing guidelines ■ Common action to address critical situations
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL VIOLENCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Hostilities to minority religious communities ■ Tensions around specific groups (including their traditions, family law and other aspects) ■ Social media fostering hate speech 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advocacy ■ Support for community understanding ■ Addressing social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Map successful national dialogues ■ Support truth and reconciliation commissions ■ Expand action on hate speech
PEACE EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unclear religious roles in Sustainable Development Goals education ■ Need for religious literacy ■ Need to educate for conflict resolution and cultures of peace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethics education ■ Workshops ■ Cultural approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Share promising approaches and curricula ■ Build on cultural activities

FRAMING THE CHALLENGES: THE SETTING

The core challenge arises from the polarized ideas and divided communities that are features of societies across different regions and social and economic systems. A widespread and worrying erosion of trust in social and political institutions accentuates tensions and divisions. Both trends reflect but also aggravate the inequalities and inequities that are integral facets of globalization, linked to technological advances and the unrelenting pace of change in modern societies.

Religious communities are deeply affected by these trends. Their focus on identities and convictions as to the proper path to follow can create or deepen rifts, but their ethos and experience also offer opportunities to play uniting and healing roles. Multi-religious actors are challenged to highlight and apply the deeply ethical values that represent the core of religious teachings to world affairs, in situations that range from the most global to the most local and personal levels. The 2013 *Religions for Peace* Commission on Just and Harmonious Societies argued that religious communities can and must promote a “robust principled pluralism that yields courteous candor and genuine mutual respect.” That ideal and goal remain valid and central.

All world regions and communities confront a sharp and ironic duality. There is incontestable progress, like advances in life expectancy, rising education levels, instant communication and ready movement, and

expectations of equality among all human beings. Previous generations could only imagine the opportunities that today promise to transform lives and unlock their potential. But negative forces are also at work: bitter conflicts and human suffering are linked to political and social processes that accentuate differences and curtail opportunity. Vast inequalities are starkly visible. The very benefits of materialism and mobility undermine traditional cultures and challenge social cohesion. Symptoms of malaise include ascendant populism, the rise of strongmen and various forms of extremism. All threaten human rights, social harmony, and human welfare.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that United Nations member nations endorsed in September 2015 articulate a common vision and architecture for action. The overarching framework highlights the complex linkages among seemingly different objectives, characterized as “Five Ps”: peace, prosperity, people, planet and partnerships. Grasping the interrelationships among them is central to bridging divides and bringing together what have been segmented sectors and intellectual frameworks. Spiritual approaches similarly cross sectoral boundaries and link them, within the ideal framework of social harmony and justice.

THE ESSENTIALS OF INTER-RELIGIOUS APPROACHES

Religious communities are called to work in complex partnerships, not only with other religious communities but with wide-ranging sectors: public and private; global, national and local. They can and must draw on religious assets that include both spiritual and ethical teachings and practical on-the-ground positions within trusted communities. Assets include distinctive opportunities to appreciate grievances and hopes that fuel tensions, and to advance authentic, creative and practical dialogues for action. Traditions and approaches that elicit and act on compassion and heal trauma, ancient gifts of religious communities, have never been so sorely needed.

Forms and roles of inter-religious, intrareligious and religious/non-religious engagement and dialogue have evolved since the 2013 *Religions for Peace* Assembly. Widely different forums and networks are at work today, some allied with the United Nations system but many focused also on a multitude of different institutions (multilateral banks, regional entities, G7/8, G20, business and educational organs) and topics (environment, water, women, children, food). This diverse experience—some that is notable for its wisdom and effectiveness, some whose impact is more tenuous—highlights the large and often untapped potential to contribute to new forms of partnerships.

This Commission needs to focus on practical dimensions of governance, with a view to bringing forward the best of religious ethics and experience. That means addressing issues that range from sharpening understandings of social justice to easing social tensions around freedom of religion and belief. The primacy of security concerns for many communities calls for a revamped understanding of how to counter both extremism and violence and to support democratic values and institutions. This must happen within a context of deep appreciation for core human rights values that focus on equality of dignity, opportunity and recognition. Religious approaches need to engage and confront underlying doubts about democratic systems, the shifting ideals for identity within plural societies and the complex and changing roles of women, youth and minority communities. Restoring faith in institutions by delivering on promises with integrity and good governance can start with religious institutions themselves and extend beyond.

FOCUSING ON THOSE LEFT BEHIND

A shared focus on those left behind, on the vulnerable among us, is a driver to action for religious communities. Healing divided societies and restoring trust demands first and foremost an unwavering focus on social justice. Religious communities thus have important opportunities to promote just and harmonious societies.

The Commission opens opportunities to define and trace new paths towards translating ideals of rights, justice and harmony into reality.

II. Good Governance and Security

Decent, efficient government, security for all citizens, and rule of law have risen higher on lists of global priorities in recent years. Surveys and consultations with diverse communities highlight the importance that people attach to safety and to good and honest governance.¹ Good governance is intrinsically linked to the democratic values of participation and service.

Traditional governance models and even the fundamental values involved are, however, challenged by numerous factors. Complex, dynamic and interconnected societies demand new thinking and, at the same time, a revitalization of core underlying values. A harsh act or word in one place ricochets instantly across boundaries, so tensions cannot be contained within a community or nation.² Trust in institutions, many surveys indicate, is weak.³ Misunderstandings and deliberate manipulation compete with the powerful data systems that allow great insights into social phenomena. In this relentlessly fast-paced world, driven by strong competitive forces, some thrive and advance but many are left behind; a vertigo that results from constant change often translates into identity politics and instability.⁴

It is poor citizens who experience the most brutal effects of weaknesses in governance and institutions. Five areas call for special attention and action. *Gender-based violence* is the largest category; one in five women in poorer communities are thought to be victims of rape or attempted rape. *Different forms of slavery or forced labor* involve people forced to work, whether in brick kilns, fishing boats or rice fields. *Police and other state abuses of power* are widespread and result in failures of justice. *Property grabbing, or the violent theft of land*, is a rising concern. In definitions of modern forms of slavery, *forced marriage* has special importance. The challenges facing women are also exemplified where widows are vulnerable because cultures in many countries do not allow women to own property. Advocate Gary Haugen argues: “The problem for the poor ... is that ... laws are rarely enforced. Without functioning public justice systems to deliver the protections of the law to the poor, the legal reforms of the modern human rights movement rarely improve the lives of those who need them most.”⁵

Religious approaches and engagement have important parts to play in addressing these complex problems. Their broad mission is to do so within frameworks that respect both human rights and a positive pluralism in today’s complex, modernizing societies. Both actual and potential approaches vary widely, as religious institutions play very different roles in different situations, for example in political organizations and in setting and applying the rules of the game for participation in partisan politics as well as in defining and managing legal systems. Where the framework of governance involves principles of secularism, understandings and arrangements on religious roles differ markedly from country to country. Thus the capacity of individual religious entities and of multi-religious bodies to contribute constructively to addressing widespread failures of governance differs, as do feasible and desirable actions.

Of special interest to the Commission are efforts that focus on the rights of poor and vulnerable communities, whether as direct actors in applying the law (especially where religious family law is involved) or as advocates for justice. Two examples of religious engagement are bold reforms of family law to strengthen women’s rights (the *Moudawana* in Morocco, for example⁶) and modern slavery.⁷ Another vital field is active religious involvement in forms of national dialogue that aim to redefine broad understandings of governance principles

and social compacts. A current example is the effort to advance a national dialogue in Uganda.⁸ Many look to South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Archbishop Desmond Tutu's leadership for inspiration.⁹ Truth and reconciliation commissions in different world regions have sought to address painful periods of conflict and tension. Reinforcing positive norms is an essential area where strong inter-religious action is needed and can show results.

Eight questions, discussed in more detail below, point to potential areas for action:

GOVERNANCE CHALLENGE	QUESTIONS FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS ACTORS
Tensions at times of transition, including elections and post-conflict	What roles can religious institutions play in assuring peaceful transitions towards more harmonious societies?
Extremist politics and movements challenging peaceful and democratic societies	How can religious communities help positively reshape narratives that are leading to negative forms of extremism?
Widespread corruption as a leading issue	How can religious communities engage more effectively in combatting corrupt practices at different levels?
Narrowing of space for civil society actors to engage with government	What might shift trends towards a narrowing of civil society space?
Weaknesses in service delivery	How can religious communities build on service delivery roles as partners in the SDG framework?
Persistent challenges in fragile and conflict-affected states	How can inter-religious entities best contribute to global dialogue on better approaches in fragile and conflict-affected state situations?
Stateless populations facing grave challenges	What roles could <i>Religions for Peace</i> play in looking towards solutions?
Challenges facing vulnerable communities	What multi-religious actions might focus on the most vulnerable communities, for example victims of modern slavery, child marriage and persecution linked to identities such as LGBTQ?

- **Action during critical times of transition.** Tensions and violence are common features of transitions, whether around elections or at other times, but they also offer opportunities to redefine social and political relationships. Religious actors (both specific traditions and inter-religious actors) have played vital roles in transitional periods—including, but not confined to, post-conflict situations. Democratic elections and other points where there is a change in party rule or where new regimes take office have emerged as times when violence can flare (Kenya 2007-8, for example). They can also serve as a clean slate, a fresh start. What are successful and less successful examples of religious engagement in the design of fair elections, in monitoring processes and in post-transition periods? What positive examples can be highlighted of inter-religious focus on agendas for new governments and administrations, periods where there are especially productive opportunities for creative and forward-looking thinking and dialogue? Are there examples of religious engagement to combat instances where populist forces highlight religious, ethnic and racial divides? The experience with religious engagement in national dialogues and truth and reconciliation processes is rich and diverse. Are there especially good models and lessons to be learned?

- **Reshaping narratives on “Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).”** The sharp focus in analysis and policy approaches on frameworks termed CVE has negative consequences. This includes the insertion of security policies and objectives within development programs and diplomacy as well as an oversimplified focus on the religious aspects of both extremism and violence.¹⁰ The tendency to focus on extremist tendencies within Islam casts a shadow across Muslim communities worldwide.¹¹ *Religions for Peace* can be a leading voice in highlighting the pitfalls of oversimplified CVE approaches, at the same time illuminating analyses of diverse patterns of radicalization and associated action (Search for Common Ground,¹² International Center for Religion and Diplomacy [ICRD],¹³ Ahmed Abaddi and the Rabita Mohammadia,¹⁴ Institute for Security Studies [ISS]¹⁵ and Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism [BRAVE] in Kenya,¹⁶ for example). Various probing analyses underscore the hopes and grievances contributing to different radical ideologies and movements. Acknowledging and addressing factors within traditions that contribute to polarizing and extremist views point towards further areas for action.
- **Religious roles in combatting corrupt practices and embedded corruption.**¹⁷ Actual and perceived corruption (misuse of public resources for private gain) undermine faith in governments and other institutions worldwide, fueling tendencies towards both populism and extremism. The challenges are ethical and practical, linked both to social and political values and to standards and approaches to governance. Important tools are now available to combat corrupt practices, and global integrity alliances—notably Transparency International and the International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC)—address the topic from multiple directions. An important question is how religious communities can engage more actively in efforts towards honest governance. Examples of courageous instances of “speaking truth to power” where poor governance erodes public trust as well as specific examples of good practices can underscore the potential for deliberate roles in addressing the problem.¹⁸ Advocacy and support to communities threatened by extractive industries and establishing standards of internal management for religious institutions are promising examples.¹⁹
- **Addressing challenges to civil society roles.** Religious institutions in many societies are pivotal actors within a broad civil society. They are thus affected by worrying trends to shrink this space and curtail its room for positive action.²⁰ The situation is complicated by ambivalence as to religious roles as civil society actors. Further, understandings of appropriate civil society roles vary widely among countries. Given powerful arguments supporting active civil society roles in just and plural societies, what actions can support renewed respect for civil society roles, including integral roles for religious communities? Are there global norms and positive examples, or do regional differences call for more region and country specific approaches?
- **Building on religious experience and assets for delivery of social services to bolster the implementation of the SDGs.** Religious institutions (in many different forms) play vital and direct roles in service delivery in many societies. Health care and education are the most prominent examples, but others include land rights adjudication, smallholder farmer support, water supply and caring for disabled people and vulnerable children.²¹ In some countries (Indonesia, Ireland and Brazil, for example) these functions are integral parts of national systems and policies; elsewhere complex and hybrid arrangements prevail. Data on religious roles are notoriously poor and often contradictory. These religious roles are vital to good governance and in meeting aspirations of people for better and peaceful lives. What practical steps can advance understanding of the complex and central roles that religious

actors play and resolve problems arising where there is ambiguity (for example, on the roles of Muslim education)?

- **Contributions to global dialogue on better approaches in situations where states are fragile, especially where conflict impedes the delivery of critical services.** The varied challenges facing the group of states best described as “fragile” have special relevance for religious communities. In virtually all of these societies, religious actors play weighty roles, but this is not properly acknowledged and appreciated in overall policy approaches.²² Engagement of religious actors at specific country levels varies, with central religious roles in some settings (Timor-Leste, Democratic Republic of the Congo) but less in others (Haiti, Zimbabwe). What actions could lead to more robust engagement and appreciation both at the global policy level (G7+ for example) and in priority countries?
- **Stateless communities.** With an estimated global population of over 10 million who lack citizenship and the status and security that goes with it,²³ what roles are religious actors playing in moving towards greater security, including acknowledging basic citizenship rights?
- **Vulnerable communities.** Religious actors, including Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew and Archbishop Justin Welby, have spoken out forcefully against modern forms of slavery.²⁴ These include bonded labor, indebtedness traps, trafficking, forced marriage and child soldiers. This has the makings of an effective multi-religious cause, linking advocacy and action. Religious action on child marriage is a potential parallel. Addressing persecution of specific groups such as albinos, accused witches and LGBTQ communities is not uncommonly justified in religious terms, suggesting potential paths for inter-religious action. Addressing practices such as female genital cutting (FGC or FGM), which religious leaders assert have no religious foundation, is another potential area for common action.²⁵

III. Social Cohesion, Migration and Integration

Harmony within plural societies today is tightly linked to ideals and practical dimensions of social cohesion. These in turn reflect explicit or implicit “social contracts” that underlie the legitimacy of governance systems, which shines a light in particular on concepts of mutual responsibilities and rights.

The many definitions and understandings of social cohesion²⁶ include a focus on shared civic values as well as trust in and respect for governing institutions and for human rights.²⁷ It involves a parallel understanding of the responsibilities of various parties, including religious actors. Related notions include social contracts and social capital, which centers on common educational and economic attainments (a critical investment), human-centered approaches and a degree of consensus as to the society’s strengths and weaknesses.²⁸ Social cohesion stands in opposition to the challenges that face many nations of both polarization and anomie, which are aggravated by weak social institutions. Negative identity politics is both a symptom and a result. Religious beliefs, communities and institutions are vital contributors to social capital.²⁹ However, where communities are divided and face historical and contemporary tensions, religious identities can accentuate weaknesses and undermine paths towards shared civil values and trust in institutions.³⁰

Migration is an ancient human phenomenon, and in many respects the contemporary levels of movement across national boundaries are consistent with historical patterns.³¹ There is substantial evidence that migration generally benefits societies, contributing to innovation and wider options that come alongside diversity.³² Nevertheless, actual migratory flows are contributing in visible ways to social tensions in many communities in different world regions.³³ Modern plural societies can challenge communities that have inherited expectations of shared customs and beliefs, including those linked to specific religious traditions. Pressures on societies to integrate new migrants who bring different traditions and expectations can threaten aspects of both explicit and implicit social compacts and, still more broadly, governing institutions. Pressure can upset notions of equity, for example those intrinsic to welfare provisions.³⁴ Experience suggests that it can be difficult to develop commitments that are supportive of government institutions/civil society and migrants/refugees. A central question is what religious leaders and communities can contribute in building the mutual trust and commitment that are vital elements of any viable social contract.

Religious institutions are directly involved in the complex questions and tensions surrounding migration and the reality of increasingly plural societies where different religious communities live in close proximity and with a reality of constant change. They represent symbols (of common purpose or divides) and institutions that uphold specific cultural and civic values and identities. Specific religious beliefs and practices can serve as uniters or dividers. Inter-religious action, therefore, can play central roles in community understandings of the benefits of migration and of social and cultural diversity, in healing tensions and rifts and in helping to build towards positive modern plural expectations and values.

High numbers of refugees and forced migrants (estimated at 68 million people in 2017)³⁵ place particular strains in three different situations: (a) societies that have large internally displaced populations, (b) host countries for large refugee populations and (c) wealthier countries where refugees seek to resettle. These phenomena impose large humanitarian costs and human suffering. The violence associated with many refugee movements and broader migrant flows militates against the ideal of relatively orderly migration. The

expectation that changing climate conditions will significantly accelerate refugee flows and displacement means that current global efforts to address humanitarian policies and institutions take on special urgency.

Again, religious institutions are centrally involved in many dimensions of refugee and other forced displacements. Conflicts resulting in displacements frequently have religious dimensions, and religious actors are involved in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts. Many religiously linked organizations are deeply engaged in humanitarian support to refugees and displaced populations, both in organized refugee settings (camps, for example) and in broader settings where refugees may find themselves. And in many situations, religious communities and specific institutions (HIAS, Church World Service, Jesuit Refugee Service and Islamic Relief, for example) are major players in the work of resettling refugees, whether in their place of origin or elsewhere. They can play major roles in addressing social strains linked to refugee flows. Religious institutions are often leading advocates for constructive policies towards refugees and forced migration. The Community of Sant'Egidio's leadership on developing and implementing policies for Humanitarian Corridors is an example, among many others.³⁶

The Commission can explore various dimensions of the challenges that currently surround both the perceptions and realities around social inclusion in diverse, plural societies broadly, and the specific reactions and policies associated with migration and refugee flows. Inter-religious bodies can be actively involved in working towards forms of social cohesion that promote an inclusive society and respect for diversity and that help, at policy and operational levels, to contend with the crisis of refugees and forced migration. Areas for discussion and action include:

- Building **knowledge about inter-religious initiatives** that specifically address social tensions and work towards building social cohesion, through youth programs, educational curricula and programs, and resolution of intergroup conflicts that impede integration.
- Addressing **urban migration**. Migrants and refugees are drawn to urban settings, which are now home to more than half the world's population. *Religions for Peace* can highlight specific measures and programs that build from realities of urban life in various settings.
- Protecting **religious minorities**, who often face particular challenges to civic acceptance and reasonable accommodation in new social settings. Identifying promising approaches and examples of positive action to promote integration would be helpful. Leadership and participatory roles within religious communities can also provide individuals with a sense of self-worth in host countries where upward social mobility is otherwise limited.³⁷
- Understanding the **roles for women and youth**, which are often lightning rods for tensions. At the same time, programs built on women's and youth leadership offer special promise, with distinctive possibilities for healing and creative solutions. Among second-generation adolescents, religiosity has been linked to higher school engagement, lower levels of violent behavior and fewer behavioral problems.³⁸ Can examples be identified of positive programs and approaches? This includes approaches to family law and family support institutions (orphanages, for example).
- Identifying religious roles vis-à-vis **communications and social media** that challenge or promote social cohesion has special importance. Active efforts can be pursued to highlight and address negative

communications that foster tensions and discord and to build on the powerful positive potential of religious communications channels. For example, Christian Syrian refugees in Jordan expressed the view that churches were a place where they were able to utilize the commonality of Christianity to connect with new circles, and Buddhist temples and religious teachings established and propagated by Vietnamese refugees in Canada eventually attracted many non-Asians, which gave the Vietnamese refugees a chance to establish connections and make an important contribution to their new neighborhoods.³⁹

- Implementing both the **Global Compacts on refugees and for migration** is a significant future challenge for all SDG partners. Religious voices have played active roles in consultations leading up to the Compacts⁴⁰ (including at the Istanbul Humanitarian Summit) and in consultations on specific provisions.⁴¹ This effort should continue with definition of concrete steps to that end. Advocacy and action can build on recent efforts to focus particularly on the plight and potential of “children on the move.”⁴²
- Identifying appropriate institutional roles for specific religious actors (“**seats at the table**”) in global dialogue and management of refugee and forced migration.

IV. Freedom of Religion and Belief and Religious Minorities

The right to freedom of religion and belief (FoRB) is an integral part of both understandings of and commitment to human rights. The right to freedom of conscience at the individual level is linked to basic concepts of human dignity and involves institutional protections that touch on both state interference in the internal affairs of religious institutions and religious involvement in government and politics. Substantial evidence documents the significance of FoRB, both as a fundamental ethical principle that is integral to concepts of equality and respect⁴³ and as a vital factor in flourishing and resilient societies.⁴⁴ The right to FoRB is highlighted at the international level in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in various conventions, and it is enshrined in many national constitutions and in legislation.

There is, however, **substantial debate about both the definition and the application of FoRB**. There are very different understandings across societies as to what the right to FoRB entails. Among areas of disagreement are the extent and circumstances of the right to change one's religion and the right to proselytize with a view to encouraging others to change their religious affiliation. There are also tensions among different human rights, most significantly involving the rights to free speech versus protections against blasphemy and speech that fosters hate and division. There can be disagreements as to religious roles in public education systems—both in delivering education and in shaping curricula and the values that underlie them.

Tolerance is often highlighted as a goal for a free and harmonious society, involving acceptance of differences within that society. The term “tolerance,” however, sparks disagreement insofar as it can imply a reluctant appreciation of others, as opposed to the positive ideals of respect or love. The Commission can build on extensive dialogue around the goals for freedom of religion and belief that are embodied in the understanding of mutual knowledge, understanding and respect.

Uncertainties and genuine disagreements as to the essential meaning of FoRB are among the reasons for **violations of religious freedom in many parts of the world**. Indeed, recent reports indicate that a large majority of the world's population currently lives in societies where there is not full respect for FoRB. A Pew Research Center report in 2016 indicated that of the 198 countries included in the study, 24 percent had high or very high levels of government restrictions on freedom of religion and belief in 2014 (the most recent year for which data were available). The share of countries with high or very high social hostilities involving religion declined, dropping from 27 percent to 23 percent.⁴⁵ A November 2018 report by Aid to the Church in Need⁴⁶ points to grave violations of religious freedom in a total of 38 countries: “In 17 of these, serious discrimination on grounds of religious faith prevails, whereas in the remaining 21 countries, there is outright persecution of religious minorities, in some cases to the point of death.” It says that the situation has deteriorated over the past two years and that, at a global level, overall respect for religious freedom has worsened.

Violations of religious freedom take various forms, some linked directly to government regulations or actions, others to societal attitudes of discrimination or outright hostility. In both instances, violence is often involved, whether state oppression (extrajudicial action, targeted sanctions and oppression) or communal

violence. The destruction of holy sites is a common tragic reality that can cause violence to flare; positive action like the Code of Conduct on Holy Sites is an example of positive and creative inter-religious efforts to address the issue.⁴⁷

Two related phenomena are of particular concern: **forms of extreme nationalism**, and rising focus on specific religious communities because of **systemic discrimination and violence** (anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, in particular).⁴⁸ The two tend to be linked, as extreme nationalism can accentuate a focus on specific religious identities, especially in countries where nationality is linked to religion. Generally, however, most citizens who practice discrimination and violence do so outside the law.

Religious freedom has been part of the mandate of human rights defenders, both public (for example, within the United Nations system or national governments) and private (civil society organizations). However, **historically there has been some distance between advocates of human rights broadly and of FoRB per se**. Religious freedom has been viewed within most human rights communities as so integral a part of human rights as not to require special focus, while for various FoRB-focused actors the right to freedom in religious practice supersedes and takes precedence over other aspects of human rights. In the United States, 1998 legislative provisions established an ambassador responsible for advancing religious freedom, annual reporting on the state of religious freedom in each country and a bipartisan commission on religious freedom. More recently, other governments have appointed senior officers with a FoRB portfolio. These include, among others, Germany and Denmark and, previously, Canada. On a global scale, the Code of Conduct on Holy Sites, which maps out a practical code and policy for holy sites worldwide, has been endorsed by religious leaders and institutions since its completion in 2011.

The brunt of restrictions on religious freedom most often falls on **religious minorities**. Thus a focus on the situation of these minorities is a concern for *Religions for Peace* and religious communities worldwide.

Within the United Nations (focused in the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights—OHCHR) a series of encounters have focused on reaching beyond consensus to concrete commitments to prohibit national advocacy of racial and religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. These efforts are reflected in the **Rabat Plan of Action**.⁴⁹ The goal is “to provide guidance on how to balance Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which provides for freedom of expression, and Article 20, which prohibits incitement of discrimination, hostility or violence.” The effort has involved a succession of workshops and meetings. On the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the Rabat Plan of Action in 2017, more than 100 states, national human rights institutions, regional organizations, religious authorities and faith-based civil society actors participated in the Rabat+5 symposium.⁵⁰

Another important development is a focus among leading Muslim scholars and religious leaders on **reaffirming commitments to protect minorities within religious communities**. This was the focus of a January 2016 meeting in Marrakesh, Morocco, inspired by Sheikh Bin Bayyah, which affirmed the Marrakesh Declaration. The agreements reflected in the declaration have been affirmed and expanded in the course of further international gatherings (most recently in December 2018 in Abu Dhabi) that have focused both on religious minorities within majority Muslim countries and on Muslim minorities in other countries.⁵¹ There have also been significant efforts, many involving multi-religious institutions and notably *Religions for Peace*,

to address the **plight of Christian and other minorities in the Middle East and of threatened Muslim communities, notably in Myanmar and in China.**

There is a need for religious leaders and scholars to work together to clarify understandings of the significance of FoRB and reasons for widespread violations. This might begin with affirmations of the ideals involved in positive pluralism, building on historic examples (such as the Convivencia in Andalusia, the period when different religious communities lived together in at least relative harmony). Points of tension to address include the management of hate speech, legal measures that restrict freedoms of religion and belief, targeting of holy sites or holy events like pilgrimages and rising discrimination and persecution based on religious beliefs and practices. Efforts to address the many tensions that surround different approaches to proselytizing deserve a priority. While the principles of equal access of all communities, commitment not to engage in efforts to convert as part of relief work and neutrality are well established in international humanitarian covenants and other frameworks, there is far less clarity where development-related work is involved.

V. Challenges Represented by Social and Cultural Violence

Violence that occurs within societies, in its many forms, is a central concern across world communities, institutions and leaders. Violence has many complex causes, and it takes very different forms. Connections between violence and religious beliefs are complex and contested; in some instances, causal links are clear (when religious identities are invoked with hostile intent), while in others, religious dimensions are peripheral or ascribed fallaciously. Addressing social and cultural violence, whether it involves religious beliefs and actors directly or not, thus represents a central challenge for inter-religious action.

Conflicts today cause immeasurable suffering: death, hunger and famine; destruction of infrastructure and livelihoods; and massive human displacement. Non-state actors are increasingly those most directly involved in unrest and violence that disrupt lives and curtail progress towards peaceful and flourishing societies. Most modern conflicts present challenges that differ markedly from those addressed through classic warfare and diplomacy, and solutions are far from evident. In many instances, long-brewing conflicts defy resolution and uneasy settlements are all too common. Boundaries between “official” and other combatants are blurred, resulting in protracted, seemingly shapeless violence and tensions. The power of organized crime, accentuated in societies with deeply embedded corruption, is another factor.

Facts about what is happening at global and more local levels with respect to social violence and related global trends are disputed. **A positive narrative⁵² traces a declining incidence of violence, especially conflicts among states. Various societies have successfully and substantially reduced levels of communal conflict and criminal violence. However, alternative, far less positive narratives** underscore the changing nature of violent conflicts and their devastating impact. Violent conflicts recur and the work of reconciliation (a prime task of religious institutions) shows mixed results. There is truth in both narratives, offering grounds for hope and confidence that collective efforts can reduce the pain of violent tensions. But there is also concern at signs of different patterns of violence and difficulties in turning violent situations around in areas like Central America, parts of Africa and regions of South Asia.

Fragile state situations prevail in significant parts of the world, where governments are unable to assure security and fair and just legal protections to their citizens.⁵³ Prospects for the future in these situations are dampened by weak basic education and health services as well as weak law enforcement or widespread social conflicts. **Legacies of trauma are passed on from generation to generation.** Violence and violations of the rights of citizens are sadly the rule. Broad understandings of an international “**responsibility to protect**” come into conflict with notions of sovereignty and the rights of societies and their governments to determine future directions.

Trends towards authoritarian approaches are often driven in part by concerns for security and failures of governments (corrupt, inefficient or simply disinterested) to provide basic protections and services. **Extreme forms of nationalism** and other extremist movements can often reflect unrelated citizen frustrations and grievances. Strongmen promise order and crackdowns on corruption and lawlessness, but their responses

often trample on basic human rights. Reactions may target specific communities or accentuate social tensions and violence by scapegoating segments of society, all too often on the basis of their religious identities.

How are religious beliefs and institutions involved in this complex of factors that threaten security in contemporary societies and in the responses we witness in different situations? How are they involved, actually and potentially, in working towards solutions?

The **links between violence and religion** are complex and hotly disputed. Various contemporary conflicts are widely perceived as essentially linked to religious differences. These include social tensions, for example in Nigeria's Middle Belt where a complex of economic, social, ethnic and religious identities are in contention, or specific movements such as Al Qaeda and Daesh that describe their motivations and ideologies in religious terms. Invariably, the realities are far more complex than a specific tie to religious beliefs or even identities; demographic, social, economic, political and cultural forces are always at work. The misuse of religious teachings is a particular source of concern and has prompted numerous efforts to affirm what are and what are not authoritative understandings of religious beliefs and identities.

Including **cultural aspects of social behavior** as a focus can help in deepening understandings of how to address violence even as it underscores the complexities of the issues at stake. It can help in unpacking the complex roles of religious beliefs and institutions in the effort, providing tools to distinguish theology and religious practice from cultural norms and traditions. The scholar Johan Galtung introduced a concept of "cultural violence" that involves "any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form." He emphasizes that "symbolic violence built into a culture does not kill or maim like direct violence or the violence built into the structure. However, it is used to legitimize either or both, as for instance in the theory of a *Herrenvolk*, or a superior race."⁵⁴ Notions of cultural violence are linked to religious roles where there are indistinct boundaries separating cultural norms related to violence and religious teachings.

Security is commonly the essential first priority concern for citizens. This echoes the central theme of the *Religions for Peace* Kyoto Assembly in 2006, which focused on the vital notion of "**shared security**."⁵⁵ Safety means freedom from the fear of violence, whether criminal or arbitrary action by states. In today's plural societies, security follows from social cohesion that is built on respect for diversity, efficient and fair legal and judicial systems and good governance. The concept of "human security" embodies a broad understanding that physical security is linked to good governance, human development and a balanced and sustainable approach to the natural environment. Civic values and citizenship are central elements of security. Capacities to resolve tensions and conflicts, to "build peace," are essential.

Positive visions for paths towards a better future (sustainable development) are a central pillar of security. Positive notions of peace and human security, including security for religious minorities and vulnerable groups, are central to an understanding of modern phenomena of violence and thus of efforts to address them. Inter-religious action can build on the various approaches to security that include human security and national security. A question for the 2019 Assembly is how far the "shared security" and "shared well-being" concepts have been tested in interfaith approaches to promote just and harmonious societies. **How do these approaches that focus on the core idea of "shared" play out as a statement, and as a possible operational approach?**

Religious roles in peacemaking and peacebuilding are the focus of another *Religions for Peace* Commission. Five topics are central to this Commission:

- **Countering violent extremism.** Governments worldwide seek effective policies to address the ravages caused by non-state social and political movements that deliberately use violence to achieve their ends. However, experts disagree sharply about why such movements persist and on the most appropriate response. How religious factors contribute to such extremist movements and associated violence is a central and sensitive topic. The common framing as “Countering Violent Extremism” (CVE), or “Preventing Violent Extremism” (PVE), can mask underlying complexities that demand sensitive understandings of religious roles and engagement with religious actors.⁵⁶ Explicit or implicit assumptions that religious factors and especially Islam are centrally involved in both extremism and violence exacerbate intergroup tensions and impede efforts to engage leaders in meaningful responses. Negative consequences include dominance of security perspectives, threats to human rights and trade-offs that undermine development efforts. Understandings and approaches at international and national levels about the involvement of religious factors in forms of violence that range from terrorist attacks to uprisings **need careful review**. Inter-religious approaches to this challenge have particular importance and promise.
- **Extreme nationalism and responses to populism.** Political and social expressions of nationalism pose rising challenges in different societies. Many have features aptly described as extremist, notably in their tendency to accentuate certain religious and cultural features in sharp opposition to others. Some forms of nationalism foster violent behaviors, including oppression of minorities and vigilantism. Inter-religious bodies have opportunities to name and elaborate on negative features of nationalist narratives and their practical manifestations. By modeling and teaching about social and political narratives that contest negative aspects of nationalism, they can trace paths towards more inclusive and constructive social and political approaches. There are numerous examples of religious groups spearheading outcry against extreme nationalism and holding governments accountable through advocacy, lobbying and other means.
- **Failures of rule of law and breakdowns in social order.** Inter-religious action can play important roles in various situations where states are fragile as well as in spaces that can be considered ungoverned. In such settings, religious actors and institutions can provide de facto governance and services, such as health care, education and social protection. They often have unparalleled knowledge of community needs and assets as well as the reasons for failures of governance and sources of conflict. Given the variety of situations and circumstances, common models for action are elusive. However, reflection on best practices could point to positive paths. Religious voices should be more deliberately engaged in global reflections on fragile state situations, including responding to challenges presented by gang dominance and other breakdowns in governance.
- **Social media as a driver of dissention versus a force for cohesion and shared understanding.** The rapid rise in access to social media is transforming challenges of social communication. Critical issues include active efforts to use social media to diffuse malicious and hate speech targeted against specific communities, and the spread of false information. Sharp increases in use of social media in many places, Myanmar for example, mean that trends towards violence (political, religious, ethnic and cultural) are exacerbated. Religious actors vary widely in their use of and approach to social media and

related modern communications media. Some are active and constructive users, while others stand back. Extremist elements have shown a noteworthy capacity to use social media to their ends. Clamping down rigidly on social media also has negative consequences, curtailing free speech and encouraging alternative channels. Concerted efforts to work with the relevant companies (Facebook, for example) and regulators to address negative aspects are needed.

- **Countering violence through culture.** Religious communities engage in both religious and cultural activities that can play material roles in addressing tendencies towards violence. These include artistic ventures such as films and television, the Fes Festival of World Sacred Music,⁵⁷ and the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra in Seville founded by Daniel Barenboim and the late Edward Said.⁵⁸ These aim to build shared cultural understanding and open paths to dialogue. Also included are approaches through sports (especially those that involve youth)⁵⁹ and different forms of people-to-people exchanges.

VI. Peace Education

Education is widely seen as critical to building and sustaining successful societies. Education is an essential part of forming civic values and thus social cohesion and cultures that promote peace. The challenges involved include the accepted global commitments to universal, quality education as well as more specific forms of education geared specifically to the challenges of avoiding and managing tensions and conflict, which are often described as peace education.

Religious involvement in education is far more significant in many countries than is generally appreciated in global discussions of education.⁶⁰ It includes direct delivery of education through schools and universities (as well as radio learning, adult literacy, early childhood education and other forms). Religious institutions also play more indirect roles across a wide spectrum, influencing development of educational curricula and the implicit or explicit values that underlie international and national education policies and implementation mechanisms. Their roles and challenges have particular significance in training future religious leaders. Religious bodies play vital roles in providing education in refugee and forced-migration situations. And they can be powerful advocates for inclusive and high-quality education at national and international levels, as well as within specific communities.

Peace education is an essential facet of general educational approaches.⁶¹ It is a long-standing area of interest and commitment for *Religions for Peace*, including through a Peace Education Standing Commission, which did important work under the leadership of Professor Johannes Lähnemann. Curricula and teaching styles need to focus on the skills and values essential for peaceful societies as integral parts of policy and its application. Specific focus on conflict management and understandings of diversity and respect are essential parts of peace education. Examples of religiously inspired peace education approaches are the Arigatou Foundation's Ethics Education program⁶² and the Schools of Peace that the Community of Sant'Egidio sponsors in many conflict-prone communities.⁶³ The Global Network of Religions for Children (another Arigatou initiative) has focused sharply on religious efforts to work together to reduce violence against children.

Peace education focuses primarily (but not exclusively) on children. It is significant that 2019 (when the *Religions for Peace* Global Assembly takes place) will mark the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A special focus on issues around values in education, quality and relevance of education, and education for vulnerable populations (including refugees and internally displaced people) deserves a special role in the Assembly.

VII. Challenges for Multi-Religious Action: Religious Assets

Multi-religious action in 2019 takes many forms; both the experience and wisdom gained through such action and the plethora of formal and informal institutions are vital assets for the *Religions for Peace* agenda.⁶⁴

The Global Assembly calls for a focus on transnational approaches that bridge different religious traditions, both to address differences and tensions and to focus positively on advancing shared goals and agendas for action. Religious institutions in many senses are the most ancient transnational, global bodies, working across national and geographic boundaries. Historically, the major global networks, and notably *Religions for Peace*, have focused most prominently on peace and conflict resolution. However, the Sustainable Development Goals reflect a global architecture that highlights efforts to move outside the institutional and intellectual silos that have separated peacebuilding from other facets of global agendas. Inter-religious approaches and institutions are likewise called to broaden agendas and partnerships.

The challenges also involve more localized multi-religious approaches and initiatives, where there are important assets to build on. Regional, national and local multi-religious action presents a dizzying picture of different initiatives and institutions, both formal and informal.

The most effective multi-religious actions combine global visions and transnational links with institutions and approaches grounded at more local levels. They combine, as the introductory section argued, “**fire from above**,” in the sense of global perspectives and broad leadership, with “**fire from below**”—action at the local and community level. The challenge is to build spaces and channels of communication that bring the two forces of energy together in collaborative ideas and work.

Multi-religious assets vary across several spectrums.

A first encompasses **basic approaches to dialogue and action** (separating the two rigidly is not constructive, as ideas and action are synergistically linked). At one end of the spectrum are theological and intellectual exchanges that aim both to foster and reinforce shared understandings and to address differences, especially those that can contribute to tensions and violence. At the other end of the spectrum are various forms of “dialogue for action.” Such approaches are grounded in a belief that uniting around a common, practical topic allows different communities to know each other as they work together to learn about and solve problems. For both theological dialogue and more action-oriented approaches, the canvas for consideration may be as broad as social peace or as narrow as a highly specific topic like a contested water point or school building.

A second spectrum relates to **timeframe**. Numerous multi-religious initiatives arise in response to specific crises (attacks on religious sites led to the Universal Code of Conduct on Holy Sites, for example) and represent common efforts to combine symbolic unity with practical, immediate support that addresses specific circumstances. These efforts may last beyond the immediate crisis but often do not. Other initiatives take a longer-term approach and may involve processes that extend over years or decades.

Multi-religious action can involve a wide range of religious communities and actors, whether formal leadership or actors representing the wider community. Some action may focus within a single tradition or even part of a community (often termed ecumenical). In many respects the most challenging forms of dialogue, which are an increasing norm and expectation in today's complex settings, involve widely different actors, religious and non-religious, public and private. Successful initiatives and partnerships tend to focus on inclusive and transparent processes (with, for example, objectives and timeframe well defined) and often focus on specific challenges, at least as a starting point. This need not imply rigidities of process or undue focus on specified outcomes, since a feature (and often an asset) of multi-religious cross-sectoral work is its creativity and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances and evolving understanding. An example is a multi-faith initiative in Ghana that began with a focus on sanitation and waste and later proved instrumental in an inter-religious effort to prevent violence around elections.

VIII. Guiding Questions for Engaging Commission Discussion on the Topic

Commission consultations will need to focus on issues of process, and on targets, outcomes and priorities for multi-religious engagement in relation to the broad agendas involved in working for just and harmonious societies. Guiding questions include:

- Are there common, shared understandings of the reasons for eroding trust in institutions globally? What explains failures of governance in many settings?
- What more can religious communities do, collectively, to address problems of embedded corruption that erode confidence in institutions and detract from both delivery of development and understandings of social justice?
- How can religious communities work together to address challenges to the shrinking of civil society space?
- Formal religious institutions have weak traditions for equal voice for all, and notably for women and youth. In considering just and harmonious societies, how can religious leaders assure that a diverse range of voices are heard?
- What practical actions can religious groups take to address the challenges facing refugees and displaced populations, both to assist them in humanitarian crises and to support successful integration in host states?
- What actions can assure a constant, purposeful focus on the poorest and most vulnerable people and communities? That includes those subject to modern slavery and especially threatened groups such as LGBTQ communities, members of minority religious groups, atheists and adolescent girls.
- With tensions often linked to elections and government transitions, what roles can religious institutions play in this vital dimension of democratic societies?
- What action could help clarify understandings of the core meaning of freedom of religion and belief, and of how to address violations of that freedom across world regions?
- What action can religious communities, individually and in various alliances, take to advance quality education, including education that focuses specifically on peaceful behaviors and support for institutions?
- What forms of multi-religious and religious-secular partnerships are most effective?
- What lessons can be learned from efforts to build multi-religious institutions and initiatives? What are the most pertinent lessons from successful, as well as from less successful, ventures?

IX. Concluding Comments

The task of promoting just and harmonious societies in the contemporary world involves enormous challenges. Current trends have vital and positive features that offer opportunities and resources our ancestors could have scarcely imagined, much less achieved. As we face the myriad threats that are the daily fodder of news reports and witness real misery of fellow citizens, the positives and assets need to be borne in mind. This is especially important as what we might view as gifts of globalization (technologies that enhance knowledge and speed communications, and concerted measures to shed social barriers like slavery, race and caste, for example) are accompanied by both ancient and new ills and seeds of conflict. Complicating matters is a greater appreciation today for the ways in which seemingly separate problems, sectors and institutions are in practice inseparable, linked in countless ways.

Religious institutions are involved in every facet of the global challenges that are most aptly defined in the architecture of the Sustainable Development Goals. One of the many assets they bring is an ancient understanding, articulated in some traditions as the notion of the whole person, that indeed the challenges we confront are interlinked, from core ideas through the most practical details of application on the ground.

The challenges of promoting just and harmonious societies cannot be separated from the dual reality (and challenge) of diversity in a world where common destinies have never been so clear and where there is an earnest quest for shared values and understandings to allow common action towards a just and sustainable future. That calls for an honest appreciation of differences, of cultures, core values and even basic objectives. It calls for an understanding of plural communities that extends well beyond tolerance to respect for and rejoicing in diversity. The polarization and divisions that mark contemporary politics reflect the realities of diversity. Who better than religious communities, with their compass focus on ethical principles and deep commitment to equity, to help in bridging the divides?

The key question is how to move diverse actors and perspectives in positive directions. There are many assets to build on, including existing multi-religious experience and institutions. Building on those assets means taking stock of different approaches and analyzing both successes and failures. Different institutions and networks bring different strengths, which can ideally be linked in “networks of networks.” At national levels, the host of national dialogue efforts and specific commissions to address truth and reconciliation offer a promising example of ambitious efforts to address the challenges of building just and harmonious societies, often in the wake of bitter conflicts. A multitude of positive actions at local levels involve diverse religious actors, working in widely different communities. They offer hope and inspiration for what can be achieved.

The global agendas that have at their very core the goal of flourishing, diverse societies cannot be advanced or achieved without complex partnerships— as recognized in the SDG architecture. While there is increasing appreciation that religious institutions are an integral part of modern societies, the mechanisms for including religious voices “at the tables” are less clearly defined. Thus forward movement requires actions that will assure that religious dimensions are seen as an essential. That involves religious literacy among the wide range of global actors (United Nations, national governments, business, civil society, academia) so that the assets and concerns that religious actors bring are appreciated. It also calls for efforts by religious actors, with central roles for multi-religious institutions, to demonstrate the wisdom and capacities they bring.

Bibliography, Resources for Further Information

- Axworthy, Lloyd. "Human Security and Global Governance: Putting People First." *Global Governance* 7, no. 1 (2001), 19–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27800284>
- Berghof Foundation. *National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners*. Berlin, May 2017.
- Casanova, José. *Beyond Secularization: Religious and Secular Dynamics in Our Global Age*. Spirit and Letter, 2017.
- Cesari, Jocelyne, and José Casanova (Eds.). *Islam, Gender, and Democracy in Comparative Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, June 2017.
- Eghdamian, K. "Religious Identity and Experiences of Displacement: An Examination into the Discursive Representations of Syrian Refugees and Their Effects on Religious Minorities Living in Jordan." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 30, no. 3 (2016), 447–467. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/few030>
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E. "Introduction: Faith-Based Humanitarianism in Contexts of Forced Displacement." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24, no. 3 (2011), 429–439. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer033>
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., Loescher, G., Long, K., and Sigona, N. (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., and Qasmiyeh, Y. M. "Muslim Asylum-Seekers and Refugees: Negotiating Identity, Politics and Religion in the UK." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23, no. 3 (2010), 294–314. doi:10.1093/jrs/feq022
- Fox, Jonathan. *Political Secularism, Religion, and the State: A Time Series Analysis*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Fox, Jonathan. "World Separation of Religion and State Into the 21st Century." *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 5 (June 2006), 537–569. doi:10.1177/0010414005276310
- Fox, Jonathan, and Shmuel Sandler. "Separation of Religion and State in the Twenty-First Century: Comparing the Middle East and Western Democracies." *Comparative Politics* 37, no. 3 (2005), 317–335. doi:10.2307/20072892
- Fox, Jonathan, and Ephraim Tabory. "Contemporary Evidence regarding the Impact of State Regulation of Religion on Religious Participation and Belief." *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 3 (2008), 245–271. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20453227>
- Fox, Jonathan. *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- The Fund for Peace. *Annual Report: Fragile State Index 2018*. <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/2018/04/24/fragile-states-index-2018-annual-report/>
- G20 Interfaith Forum 2018. *Policy Recommendations for the 2018 G20 Summit*. November, 2018. https://www.g20interfaith.org/sites/default/files/Recommendations%202018_0.pdf
- Gozdzia, E. M. "Spiritual Emergency Room: The Role of Spirituality and Religion in the Resettlement of Kosovar Albanians." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15, no. 2 (2002), 136–152. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/15.2.136>
- Gozdzia, E. M., and Shandy D.J. "Editorial Introduction: Religion and Spirituality in Forced Migration." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15, no. 2 (2002), 129–135. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/15.2.129>
- Grim, Brian, Greg Clark, and Robert Edward Snyder. "Is Religious Freedom Good for Business?: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis." *International Journal of Research on Religion*. 2014 Volume 10, Article 4. http://www.religjournal.com/articles/article_view.php?id=85
- Hagan, J. M. *Migration Miracle: Faith, Hope, and Meaning on the Undocumented Journey*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.

- Haugen, Gary. *Good News About Injustice*. Downer's Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999.
- Haugen, Gary, and Victor Boutros. "And Justice for All: Enforcing Human Rights for the World's Poor." *Foreign Affairs*, May 2010. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-05-01/and-justice-all>
- Haugen, Gary, and Victor Boutros. *The Locust Effect: Why the End of Poverty Requires the End of Violence*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- James, P. (Ed.). *Religion, Identity, and Global Governance: Ideas, Evidence, and Practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- Khawaja, N. G., White, K. M., Schweitzer, R., and Greenslade, J. "Difficulties and Coping Strategies of Sudanese Refugees: A Qualitative Approach." *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 45, no. 3 (2008), 489–512. <https://eprints.qut.edu.au/7425/1/7425a.pdf>
- Marshall, Katherine. "Ancient and Contemporary Wisdom and Practice on Governance as Religious Leaders Engage in International Development." *Journal of Global Ethics* 4, no. 3 (2008), 217–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449620802496347>
- Marshall, Katherine. "Education for All: Where Does Religion Come In?" *Comparative Education* 46, no. 3 (2010), 273–287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2010.503739>
- Marshall, Katherine. *Interfaith Journeys: An Exploration of History, Ideas, and Future Directions*. World Faiths Development Dialogue. February 23, 2017. Accessed November 13, 2018. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/interfaith-journeys-an-exploration-of-history-ideas-and-future-directions>
- Marshall, Katherine. "Faith Perspectives for Development Institutions: New Faces of Compassion and Social Justice." *International Journal* 59, no. 4 (2004), 893–901. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002070200405900413>
- Mavelli, L., Wilson, E. K. (Eds.). *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*. London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017.
- Mollica, R. F., Cui, X., McInnes, K., and Massagli, M. P. "Science-Based Policy for Psychosocial Interventions in Refugee Camps: A Cambodian Example." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 190, no. 3 (2002), 158–166. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11923650>
- Omer, Atalia, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Parsitau, D. S. "The Role of Faith and Faith-Based Organizations among Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24, no. 3 (2011), 493–512. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fer035>
- Pinker, Stephen. *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012.
- Power, Samantha. "The Enforcer: A Christian Lawyer's Global Crusade." *The New Yorker*, January 19, 2009. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/01/19/the-enforcer>
- Saunders, J. B., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., and Snyder, S. *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. <https://www.palgrave.com/us/book/9781137586285>
- Seiple, Chris. "Building Religious Freedom: A Theory of Change." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2012), 97–102. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2012.706437>
- Seiple, Chris. "Memo to the State: Religion and Security." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2007), 39–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2007.9523276>
- Seiple, Robert A., and Dennis R. Hoover (Eds.). *Religion and Security: The New Nexus in International Relations*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
- Shah, Timothy. "Religious Freedom: Why Now? Defending an Embattled Human Right." *Public Discourse: The Journal of the Witherspoon Institute*, July 3, 2012.

- Shoeb, M., Weinstein, H. M., and Halpern, J. “Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 20, no. 3 (2007), 441–460. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fem003> <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article/20/3/441/1586096>
- Sivasubramaniam, Malini, and Ruth Hayhoe (Eds.). *Religion and Education: Comparative and International Perspectives*. Oxford: Symposium Books, 2018.
- Stambach, Amy, Katherine Marshall, Matthew J. Nelson, Liviu Andreescu, Aikande C. Kwayu, Philip Wexler, Yotam Hotam, Shlomo Fischer, and Hassan El Bilawi. “Religion, Education, and Secularism in International Agencies.” *Comparative Education Review* 55, no. 1 (2011), 111–142. <https://doi.org/10.1086/657650>
- Thames, H. Knox, Chris Seiple, and Amy Rowe. *International Religious Freedom Advocacy: A Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009. <https://muse.jhu.edu/>
- Wellman, James K., and Clark Lombardi (Eds.). *Religion and Human Security: A Global Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Williams, Rowan. “Why Social Cohesion Needs Religion.” Building Bridges Conference, Singapore. December 6, 2007. Accessed November 14, 2018. <http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1144/why-social-cohesion-needs-religion>
- United Nations. *Briefing Note: What Makes or Breaks National Dialogues?* April 2017. <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IPTI-Briefing-Note-National-Dialogues.pdf>
- UNHCR. “Welcoming the Stranger: Affirmations for Faith Leaders.” <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/hcdialogue%20/51b6de419/welcoming-stranger-affirmations-faith-leaders.html>
- USAID. “Religion, Conflict & Peacebuilding.” Accessed November 14, 2018. <https://jliflc.com/resources/usaaid-religion-conflict-peacebuilding/>

Helpful websites:

- **The Global Women of Faith Network and Global Interfaith Youth Network (from *Religions for Peace*):**
<https://rfp.org/connect/global-women-of-faith-network>;
<https://rfp.org/connect/global-interfaith-youth-network>
- **African Council of Religious Leaders (also from *Religions for Peace*):** <http://acrl-rfp.org>
- **United Religions Initiative:** <http://www.uri.org>
- **Tanenbaum:** <https://tanenbaum.org>
- **Islamic Society of North America:** <http://www.isna.net>
- **Arigatou International:** <https://gnrc.net/en>
- **The Multifaith Action Society in Canada:** <https://multifaithaction.jimdo.com>
- **ARRCC (Australian Multi-Faith Effort to Fight Climate Change):** <https://www.arrcc.org.au>

There are also some exciting steps being taken to improve evaluation of multi-religious initiatives – for example:

- **Effective Inter-Religious Action in Peacebuilding Project (EIAP) out of AfP & partners:**
<https://jliflc.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/EIAP-Guide-Pilot-Phase-Draft-03.08.17.pdf>;
<https://allianceforpeacebuilding.org/our-work/about-our-work/peacebuilding-evaluation/effective-inter-religious-action-in-peacebuilding>
- **Georgetown University Berkley Center, WFDD:**
<https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu>;
<https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/WFDD>
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights:**
<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx>

Endnotes

- 1 See for example: http://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/files/introduction_key_findings.pdf and http://www.un.org/en/events/peacekeepersday/2011/publications/un_rule_of_law_indicators.pdf
- 2 Axworthy, Lloyd. "Human Security and Global Governance: Putting People First." *Global Governance* 7, no. 1 (2001), 19–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27800284>.
- 3 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/21/confidence-in-government-falls-in-much-of-the-developed-world/>; <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/30/global-views-political-systems>; <http://www.people-press.org/2017/12/14/public-trust-in-government-1958-2017>; <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1597/confidence-institutions.aspx>
- 4 Croucher, Sheila. "Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World." <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/the-paradox-of-identity-politics>; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14781159508412793?journalCode=cpar19>
- 5 Haugen, Gary and Boutros, Victor. "And Justice for All: Enforcing Human Rights for the World's Poor." *Foreign Affairs*, May 2010. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2010-05-01/and-justice-all>
- 6 Center for Public Impact. "Reforming Moroccan Family Law: The Moudawana." <https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/case-study/moroccan-moudawana-reform/>
- 7 Marshall, Katherine. "Modern Slavery: Engaging Religious Actors." 2017. <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/modern-slavery-engaging-religious-actors>
- 8 <https://www.civsourceafrica.com/national-dialogue>
- 9 "Tutu and His Role in the Truth & Reconciliation Commission." 2016. <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/tutu-and-his-role-truth-reconciliation-commission>
- 10 <https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/08/engaging-religion-and-religious-actors-countering-violent-extremism>
- 11 Seiple, Chris. "Memo to the State: Religion and Security." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 5, no. 1 (2007), 39–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2007.9523276>. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15570274.2007.9523276>; James, P. (Ed.). *Religion, Identity, and Global Governance: Ideas, Evidence, and Practice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011.
- 12 <https://www.sfcg.org/tag/violent-extremism/>
- 13 <https://icrd.org/faith-and-art-innovation-in-cve-opinion/>
- 14 <https://moroccoonthemove.com/2013/06/28/moroccos-fight-against-radicalism-raising-a-new-generation-of-islamic-scholars-advocates-macp/>; <http://www.ma.undp.org/content/morocco/fr/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2018/03/23/signature-officielle-du-document-de-projet-appui-la-promotion-de-la-tol-rance-du-civisme-de-la-citoyennet-en-milieu-scolaire-et-la-pr-vention-des-comportements-risques-.html>
- 15 <https://issafrica.org/about-us/press-releases/preventing-terrorism-needs-better-evidence-from-african-projects>
- 16 <http://braveprogram.org/>
- 17 <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2018/Reducing-Corruption-could-help-Prevent-Violent-Extremism.html>; G20 Interfaith brief on religion and corruption
- 18 Examples include initiatives in Nigeria to engage religious leaders: https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/Nigeria_overview_of_corruption_and_influence_of_social_norms_2014.pdf
- 19 Catholic Bishops on Latin American extractive industries; Valentine Gitoho interview: <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/interviews/a-discussion-with-valentine-gitoho-financial-managament-consultant-and-entrepreneur-in-kenya>
- 20 <https://www.civicus.org/index.php/media-resources/news/blog/3528-resilience-in-times-of-shrinking-civic-space-how-resilient-roots-organisations-are-attempting-to-strengthen-their-roots-through-primary-constituent-accountability>; Marshall, Katherine. "Ancient and Contemporary Wisdom and Practice on Governance as Religious Leaders Engage in International Development." *Journal of Global Ethics* 4, no. 3 (2008), 217–229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449620802496347>; <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17449620802496347>
- 21 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2007/np05/en>; <http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/partners/brief/faith-based-organizations>; http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/documents/partners/2014_UNDP_Guidelines-on-Engaging-with-FBOs-and-Religious-Leaders_EN.pdf
- 22 <https://www.fragilestates.org/2015/02/10/religion-development-fragile-states-complex-relationship/>
- 23 <https://www.unhcr.org/stateless-people.html>
- 24 <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2018-05/pope-francis-video-message-modern-slavery.html>; <http://basilica.ro/en/ecumenical-patriarchate-a-new-forum-on-modern-slavery>; <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/speaking-and-writing/speeches/archbishop-canterburys-speech-istanbul-forum-modern-slavery>

- 25 <https://uganda.unfpa.org/en/news/religious-leaders-speak-one-voice-pledge-end-female-genital-mutilation>; <https://chiefrabbi.org/the-chief-rabbi-signs-declarations-condemning-female-genital-mutilation-and-forced-marriage>
- 26 This is an example of efforts to define social cohesion: "Literature shows that there is a fragmented view of what social cohesion is.... A number of definitions that relate to economic aspects of society, such as general well-being and equal representation/opportunities in society have been adopted worldwide (e.g. in European Union, Canada and Australia). Such definitions have commonalities such as well-being of the members of the group, shared values such as trust, and equal opportunities in society." <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13511610.2018.1497480>
- 27 <http://www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/social-cohesion.htm>
- 28 <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=I7bfRtKgZPQC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=religion+and+social+capital&ots=usMB04YCRI&sig=Sfb6-lf9c2BmTO4P1zxzaq5O0r0#v=onepage&q=religion%20and%20social%20capital&f=false>
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 For example, Somali women who experience racism in Australia: <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article-abstract/15/2/171/1579133?redirectedFrom=fulltext> ; or among Syrian refugees in Jordan: <https://academic.oup.com/jrs/article-abstract/30/3/447/2566846?redirectedFrom=fulltext>
- 31 See for example: Mavelli, Luca and Wilson, Erin (Eds.), *The Refugee Crisis and Religion: Secularism, Security and Hospitality in Question*. Rowman and Littlefield, 2016.
- 32 See for example: OECD. "Is Migration Good for the Economy." 2014. <https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf>
- 33 International Crisis Group. "Turkey's Growing Refugee Challenge – Rising Social Tensions." October, 2017. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkeys-growing-refugee-challenge-rising-social-tensions>
- 34 See an interesting paper about this topic (focused on the USA): https://www.jstor.org/stable/42864336?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents; and a more global vision: [https://gfmnd.org/news/%E2%80%9Ctowards-global-social-contract-migration-and-development%E2%80%9999-thematic](https://gfmnd.org/news/%E2%80%9Ctowards-global-social-contract-migration-and-development%E2%80%9D-germany-morocco-co-chairs%E2%80%9999-thematic)
- 35 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2018/6/5b27c2434/forced-displacement-above-68m-2017-new-global-deal-refugees-critical.html>
- 36 January 26, 2018, Katherine Marshall, Shaun Casey, Attalah Fitzgibbon, Azza Karam, Majbritt Lyck-Bowen, Ulrich Nitschke, Mark Owen, Isabel Phiri, Alberto Quatrucchi, Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, Msgr. Robert Vitillo, and Erin Wilson. "Religious roles in refugee resettlement: pertinent experience and insights, addressed to G20 members." <http://www.economics-ejournal.org/economics/discussionpapers/2018-11>
- 37 Saunders, J. B., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., and Snyder, S. *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- 38 For example, Bankston III, C. L., and Zhou, M. "The Ethnic Church, Ethnic Identification, and the Social Adjustment of Vietnamese Adolescents." *Review of Religious Research*, 18–37, 1996.
- 39 Eghdamian, K. "Religious Identity and Experiences of Displacement: An Examination into the Discursive Representations of Syrian Refugees and Their Effects on Religious Minorities Living in Jordan." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6, 2016; Dorais, L. J. "Faith, Hope and Identity: Religion and the Vietnamese Refugees." *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 26, no. 2, 57–68, 2007.
- 40 Saunders, J. B., Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, E., and Snyder, S. *Intersections of Religion and Migration: Issues at the Global Crossroads*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. For example, Bankston III, C. L., & Zhou, M. "The Ethnic Church, Ethnic Identification, and the Social Adjustment of Vietnamese Adolescents." *Review of Religious Research*, 18–37, 1996. Eghdamian, K. "Religious Identity and Experiences of Displacement: An Examination into the Discursive Representations of Syrian Refugees and Their Effects on Religious Minorities Living in Jordan." *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 6, 2016; Dorais, L. J. "Faith, Hope and Identity: Religion and the Vietnamese Refugees." *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 26, 2007 2, 57–68.
- 41 See for example: Joint Learning Initiative July 2018. *Faith-Based Approach to Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees*. <https://refugee.jlilc.com/resources/faith-based-gcr/>
- 42 <https://jlilc.com/resources/faith-action-for-children-on-the-move-action-plan/>
- 43 See for example: John Courtney Murray, S.J. "Freedom of Religion: The Ethical Problem." <https://www.library.georgetown.edu/woodstock/murray/1945b>
- 44 See for example articles by Tim Shah, Chris Seiple, Brian Grim.
- 45 Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewforum.org/2016/06/23/trends-in-global-restrictions-on-religion/>
- 46 <http://religious-freedom-report.org/>
- 47 <https://www.codeonholysites.org/>
- 48 See a recent *Tablet* article on the topic: Gledhill, Ruth. "Extreme Nationalism Leads to Surge in Religious Persecution." 23 November 2018, <https://www.thetablet.co.uk/author/95/ruth-gledhill>
- 49 https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Opinion/SeminarRabat/Rabat_draft_outcome.pdf

- 50 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Articles19-20/Pages/Index.aspx>
- 51 <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2017/05/the-marrakesh-declaration-a-muslim-call-for-protection-of-religious-minorities-or-freedom-of-religion>; <http://binbayyah.net/english/hundreds-of-religious-leaders-to-affirm-rights-of-religious-minorities-and-respect-for-muslims-in-united-states/>
- 52 Argued most prominently by Stephen Pinker (*The Better Angels of Our Nature*).
- 53 There are varying (and contested) definitions of fragile states. A respected report is issued annually by the Fund for Peace, <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/2018/04/24/fragile-states-index-2018-annual-report/>
- 54 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022343390027003005>
- 55 <https://rfp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Kyoto-Declaration-Final-Draft.pdf>
- 56 Mustafa Ali, *Internationalization of Terrorism*, explores different approaches to the CVE/PVE concern.
- 57 https://www.huffingtonpost.com/katherine-marshall/from-fes-with-love_b_554739.html
- 58 <https://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>
- 59 For example: <http://sportforhumanity.com/>
- 60 Marshall, Katherine. "Global Education Challenges: Exploring Religious Dimensions." *International Journal of Educational Development*, 62, 2018.
- 61 Lähnemann, Johannes. "The Contribution of Interreligious Initiatives to Human Rights Education." https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-319-39351-3_26
- 62 <https://arigatouinternational.org/en/what-we-do/ethics-education>
- 63 <https://www.santegidio.org/pagelD/30076/langID/en/Schools-of-Peace.html>
- 64 For a broad review of interfaith history and institutions see Marshall, Katherine. *Interfaith Journeys: An Exploration of History, Ideas, and Future Directions*. World Faiths Development Dialogue. February 23, 2017.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Advancing *Shared Well-Being* by Promoting Integral Human Development



Executive Summary

PART I. INTRODUCING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by all UN member states in September 2015 for the 15-year period 2016–2030. The SDGs are a set of goals—rather than specific plans or legally enforceable standards—for the integrated fulfillment of economic rights, social justice and environmental sustainability. The SDGs build on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948, which marked the world’s governments’ first recognition of basic rights for all people.

The SDGs aim to implement the Universal Declaration by realizing economic rights (to food, health, education, decent work, etc.), social rights (to gender equality, freedom from violence, equal access to justice, etc.) and environmental responsibility (using sustainable water management, stopping anthropogenic climate change and ending hazardous pollution), which taken together constitute sustainable development. Countries will achieve the SDGs through a combination of new technologies, behavior change, improved public services and the regulation of corporate behavior regarding environmental protection, labor standards and gender equality.

The SDGs give special attention to vulnerable groups that lack access to justice, face extreme deprivation, are exposed to violence and abuse, and are at high risk of environmental harms. Importantly, SDG 10 aims to reduce income inequality, both among and within nations, across “gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts” (*2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*). In UN parlance, the SDGs command that we “leave no one behind.”



United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development, September 2015.
© UN Photo/Loeys Felipe

PART II. IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs

Implementing the SDGs will require four key steps: (1) political commitment; (2) expert planning; (3) multi-stakeholder mobilization and participation and (4) financing through government budgets, development aid and capital markets. Spending by governments and businesses must be redirected to ensure adequate resources are directed towards social protection of the poor and vulnerable; essential public services, including health and education; infrastructure investment and environmental protection.

In 1970, the UN General Assembly called on the developed countries to provide 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA), a goal which was achieved by only a few donor countries. Subsequent UN resolutions and commitments were mostly unmet as well. For example, the United States currently provides only around 0.17% of its GNI, rather than the 0.7% global standard. The shortfall, 0.53% of GDP, amounts to roughly \$100 billion per year that is currently lacking from the US in the global struggle to achieve the SDGs.

A 2018 International Monetary Fund (IMF) and UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) study found that the *SDG financing gap* for the 59 low-income developing countries (LIDCs) eligible for IMF concessional assistance is approximately \$300–\$400 billion per year. This means that the poor countries cannot achieve the SDGs without an incremental \$300–\$400 billion in development aid and other financing. While this is a large sum for the poor countries, it is modest when viewed from a global perspective, as it amounts to a mere 0.5% of world output. The rich governments even fail to fully fund the fight against epidemic diseases such as AIDS, TB and malaria, despite proven successes in controlling those diseases when adequate funding is available.

Pope Paul VI laid out the moral, religious and spiritual obligations of the rich to help the poor in his 1967 encyclical, *Populorum Progressio*. In this encyclical, Pope Paul VI explains the Catholic Church's doctrine of the universal destination of goods, which holds that the world was created for everybody, not just for the rich. Moral commands of universal dignity and human needs—which is to say “the common good”—must be prioritized over private property.

Distributive justice and compassion are core precepts of all of the world's major faiths. Jewish biblical law, for example, enjoins the landowner to set aside part of the harvest for the poor. In Islam, the practice of zakat calls on those with incomes above a minimum to give a portion (often one-fortieth) to the poor. Buddhism emphasizes the importance of compassion and donation. The Hindu doctrine of renunciation also calls us to enjoy the world and its resources with open and generous hands.

The call for distributive justice and compassion is more vital than ever. The global economy has created a “winner take all” dynamic leading to unprecedented wealth accumulation among the world's richest individuals. As Oxfam has demonstrated, the world's richest 26 individuals have a combined net worth of \$1.6 trillion, equal to the combined wealth of the bottom half of the world's population (3.8 billion people). *Forbes* magazine has calculated that there are 2,208 billionaires (as of March 2018), with a combined net worth of \$9.1 trillion. At a conservative 5% return, this wealth generates an annual income of some \$450 billion, enough to close the SDG financing gap for 1.7 billion people in the low-income developing countries, enabling universal basic health coverage, universal education through secondary school, the end of three epidemic diseases and access to clean water, sanitation and modern energy services.

PART III. THE SDGs AND SIX DEEP SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Implementation of the SDGs will require *six transformations* in society, in the following areas: (1) education, gender and inequality; (2) health, well-being and demography; (3) clean energy and industry; (4) sustainable food, land, water and oceans; (5) smart cities and transport; and (6) digital technology and e-governance. These transformations entail systematic changes in technologies (e.g., the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy), behavior (e.g., the reduction of beef in the diet in favor of plant proteins) and effective regulations and enforcement (e.g., the elimination of all modern forms of slavery and human trafficking). It will require sustained efforts over many years, typically a generation or more, to bring these transformations to full fruition.

PART IV. THE DECISIVE ROLE OF MULTI-RELIGIOUS ACTION TO ACHIEVE THE SDGs

Multi-religious action will be essential to achieve the SDGs. Each major religion has unique and significant assets to contribute to the fulfillment of the SDGs, including ethical frameworks, rich engagement with billions of people (including the poorest) and a remarkable network of institutions delivering education, healthcare, and community-based development. The Ethics in Action initiative, hosted by the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, with the partnership of faith communities as part of *Religions for Peace*, leading universities and NGOs, demonstrated the ability of faith leaders from many religions to formulate shared ethical principles and guidelines for action to achieve the SDGs. Looking ahead, religious communities can contribute to fulfilling the SDGs by convening key stakeholders, working with local congregations and communities and strengthening their direct service provision, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable.

I. Introducing the Sustainable Development Goals

Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, containing the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Figure 1), was adopted by all UN member states in September 2015 for the 15-year period 2016–2030. The SDGs are the world's agreed goals to achieve sustainable development by 2030. In the context of the 2030 Agenda, sustainable development means the simultaneous fulfillment of economic rights, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The 2030 Agenda offers a detailed text that explains the purposes of sustainable development and the conceptual framework of the SDGs.



Figure 1. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Source: “Sustainable Development Goals kick off with start of new year,” United Nations News Centre, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2015/12/sustainable-development-goals-kick-off-with-start-of-new-year/>, 30 December 2015, Web.

ECONOMIC RIGHTS

From almost the start of the United Nations, and specifically with the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the world's governments have recognized the basic rights of all people, including political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. The Universal Declaration stands as the “moral charter” of the UN. It has given rise to a vast international law, including treaties, case law, UN General Assembly resolutions and initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (during 2001–2015) and the SDGs (during 2016–2030).

Economic rights are a subset of human rights. Most economic rights are reflected in the SDGs. Key economic rights, and associated SDGs, are the following:

- Right to an adequate standard of living (SDG 1)
- Right to social security (SDG 1)
- Right to food (SDG 2)
- Right to health (SDG 3)
- Right to education (SDG 4)
- Right to safe water and sanitation (SDG 6)
- Right to safe and modern energy (SDG 7)
- Right to decent work (SDG 8)
- Right to development (SDG 9)
- Right to decent housing (SDG 11)

SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion means not only social security and social insurance but also rights to fairness and justice of vulnerable groups within society. Social inclusion is part and parcel of the SDGs, including the following:

- Gender equality (SDG 5)
- Reduced inequality of income and wealth (SDG 10)
- Right to freedom from violence (SDG 16)
- Right to equal access to justice (SDG 16)
- Rights of vulnerable groups to land and other protections (SDG 2)

The goal to reduce income inequality (SDG 10) is notable. While the UN and international law have not defined a fair distribution of income, the high and rising inequality of wealth and income in the world today led to the adoption of SDG 10 calling for a reduction of inequality among and within nations. The 2030 Agenda notes that governments should assess inequalities according to “gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.”

The SDGs give special attention to vulnerable groups, including women and children, migrants, racial and ethnic minorities, the disabled, the geographically isolated and indigenous groups. Vulnerable groups are often poor and often lack access to justice. Their property, their rights as citizens and physical persons are often subjected to violence and abuse.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was agreed in 1948 and key covenants on civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights were agreed in the 1960s, there was still very little diplomatic focus on the growing costs and risks of human-induced environmental degradation. The first global conference on the environment was the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm in 1972. This was followed by the Brundtland Commission, in 1987, that first gave the world’s governments the concept of sustainable development, and then by the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 (known formally as the UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED).

The Rio Earth Summit agreed on three major treaties: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The UNFCCC aimed to stop human-induced global warming in order to avoid “dangerous anthropogenic [human-caused] interference in the climate system.” The CBD aimed to stop the massive loss of Earth’s biodiversity. The UNCCD aimed to stop the degradation of dry lands, known as desertification.

When the UN member states enthusiastically adopted the three multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) at the Rio Earth Summit, it seemed that sustainable development had arrived as a guiding principle for global diplomacy. Yet it was not to be. None of the three treaties was actually implemented in a serious way in the ensuing years.

When the treaties came up for a 20-year review in 2012, at a UN conference known as Rio+20, the considered technical view was that all three treaties had failed *utterly* to change the world’s reckless course towards global warming, species extinction, desertification (or degradation) of dry lands and other environmental harms. It was the failure of the three treaties to be put into practice that motivated the Government of Colombia to recommend to the UN member states the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals to help get the world on track to head off environmental disaster, and to do so in a context of economic rights and social inclusion.

As of 2015, when the SDGs were adopted, the UN member states had identified three main categories of human-induced environmental disaster: climate change (global warming), destruction of biodiversity and habitats (including freshwater depletion) and pollution of the air, sea and water from various industrial activities.

The SDGs therefore address the environmental threats facing the planet mainly in the following areas:

- Sustainable farm practices (SDG 2)
- Sustainable water management (SDG 6)
- Sustainable cities and other human settlements (SDG 11)
- Sustainable consumption and production (SDG 12)
- Stopping human-induced climate change (SDG 13)
- Protecting Earth’s marine ecosystems and biodiversity (SDG 14)
- Protecting Earth’s terrestrial ecosystems and biodiversity (SDG 15)

In general, these various goals are to be met through a combination of introducing new technologies (such as the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy), changing behavior (such as healthier diets that are also better for the environment) and improving regulations and enforcement (such as improved design and enforcement of antipollution laws, overfishing regulations, limits on logging rights, protection of endangered species and other environmental protections).

II. Implementing the SDGs

The SDGs are a set of goals, not a plan of action. They are part of a UN General Assembly resolution rather than a legally enforceable treaty. In this sense, they are meant to be a tool for guidance, advocacy and accountability, rather than a specific set of enforceable actions. And it is worth noting that even legally enforceable UN treaties are very often not enforced in practice.

One can say that the SDGs are part of a long UN agenda dating back to the 1960s to implement the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, partly through treaties, but mostly through global goals. The first of these was the Decade of Development (1960–1970) that put the UN member states on record as calling for successful development of the poorer nations, including the newly decolonized nations. This was followed by the Second Development Decade (1971–1980), the Third Development Decade (1981–1990) and the Fourth Development Decade (1991–2000). By the late 1990s, the UN member states agreed that economic growth per se was not enough to achieve the development objectives and that a more holistic framework was needed. This in turn gave birth to the Millennium Development Goals (2001–2015) and now the Sustainable Development Goals (2016–2030).

FOUR STEPS TO IMPLEMENTING THE SDGs

The first step is political commitment: Governments need to place the SDGs within the purview of the cabinet and the respective government departments. Governments should integrate the SDG targets and indicators within government visions, plans and budgets.

The second step is planning: The SDGs require detailed and long-term plans of action. Challenges such as providing universal health coverage, as called for by SDG 8, or decarbonizing the energy system, as called for by SDGs 7 and 13, require detailed multiyear plans. Governments are often not adept at, or even interested in, plans of action with time horizons beyond the term of the sitting government, yet long-term plans lasting at least a decade or even far longer (e.g., in the case of energy policy) are essential for SDG success.

The third step is multi-stakeholder mobilization: SDG implementation will require the partnership and cooperation of government, business, community groups, religious organizations, academia and other leading stakeholders in society. The very nature of the deep transformations required to achieve the SDGs makes a multi-stakeholder approach essential.

The fourth step is financing: The SDGs are inevitably about the reorientation of financial flows by both governments and businesses. Governments must direct additional revenues (from taxes and development assistance) towards the social protection of the poor, the provision of essential public services, the investment in infrastructure and the protection of the environment. Businesses must redirect current outlays away from socially and environmentally destructive practices, such as fossil fuel use, towards socially and environmentally sustainable ends, such as renewable energy.

FINANCING THE SDGs

During the entire period of UN development efforts, dating back to the Decade of Development in the 1960s, providing adequate financial support for the poorest countries has been an ongoing and largely unsolved struggle. From the start, the UN has tried to mobilize additional financing for the poorest countries in order for them to invest in health, education and infrastructure.

As early as 1960 the UN General Assembly established the UN Capital Development Fund to address the capital needs of the least developed countries. In 1970, the UN General Assembly called on the developed countries to provide at least 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) as official development assistance (ODA). It is a goal that has never been achieved, except by a handful of donor countries, currently including Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, and the United Arab Emirates, a major non-OECD donor country (Figure 2).

Official development assistance as a percentage of donor gross national income

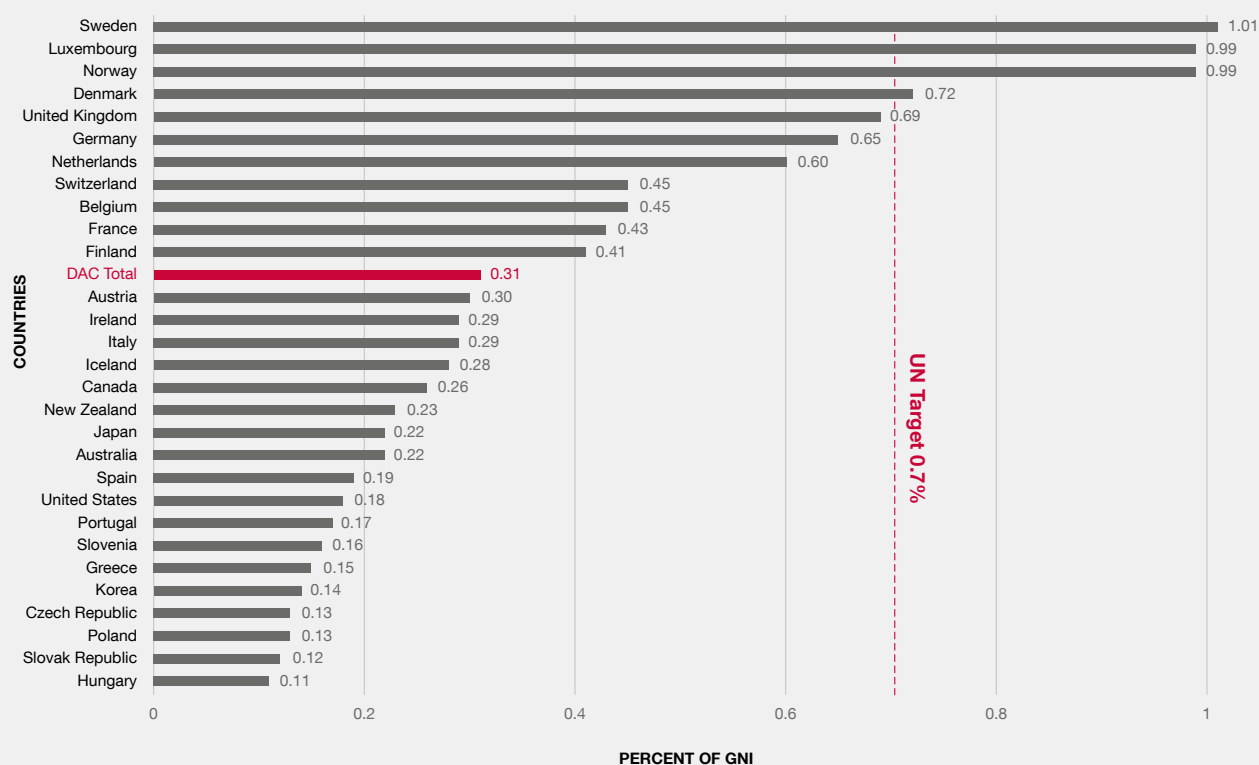


Figure 2. Only Sweden, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, and the United Kingdom have given approximately or above the UN target share of 0.7% of gross national income for official development assistance. Source: OECD, 2018. DAC Statistics

In the mid-1970s the developing countries led the call for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) that included higher prices for primary commodities and sufficient development assistance to end poverty. The NIEO was aggressively resisted by the United States, and the initiative was completely abandoned by the early 1990s.

In 2002, following the adoption of the UN Millennium Development Goals, the UN member states agreed on the Monterrey Consensus, which called on developed countries

that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP of developed countries to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed 14 Countries, and we encourage developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that ODA is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. (Paragraph 42)

In 2005, the G8 countries, meeting in Gleneagles, Scotland, pledged to double aid to Africa by 2010 and to increase overall ODA by at least \$50 billion by 2010. These Gleneagles commitments similarly were not met.

In 2015, in the lead-up to the SDGs, the UN member states adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, similarly aimed to structure the financing of the SDGs. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognizes the need for increased financing in several priority areas, including social protection and essential public services for all, scaled-up efforts to end hunger and malnutrition, bridging the infrastructure gap, sustainable industrialization, decent work for all, protection of ecosystems and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. It identifies action areas for financing, including domestic public resources (mainly budget revenues), private business financing and international development cooperation.

Poignantly, while the Monterrey Consensus had called on “developed countries that have not done so” to reach 0.7% of GNI in official development assistance, the Addis Ababa plan merely reaffirmed the commitment by “many developed countries” to achieve 0.7% of GNI. The main reason for the change in language between 2002 and 2015 is that by 2015 the US government had explicitly repudiated the intention to ever reach 0.7% of GNI in ODA. As of 2019, US official development assistance languishes at around 0.17% of GNI, roughly a shortfall of \$100 billion per year from the US alone compared with the 0.7 standard.

THE SDG FINANCING SHORTFALL

The stark reality is that the world’s low-income developing countries (LIDCs) cannot afford to finance the SDGs out of their own resources. A recent project in 2018 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)¹ aimed to clarify the spending gap for the 59 LIDC countries eligible for IMF concessional assistance. These 59 countries include 1.7 billion people with per capita incomes generally below \$1,700 per year (while average incomes in the developed countries are \$40,000 or more). The world’s poorest countries are included in the LIDC group and are highly concentrated in sub-Saharan Africa.

¹ The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, an initiative under the auspices of UN Secretary-General António Guterres to support the Sustainable Development Goals (<http://www.unsdsn.org>).

The IMF study demonstrated that on average, the LIDCs would have to spend an additional 14% of their GDP in public outlays (that is, through budgetary expenditures) in order to meet SDG targets for health, education, water and sanitation, and electricity (Figure 3). On the other hand, these countries could only be expected to mobilize around 5% of GDP in additional budgetary revenues. The implication is a shortfall in budget financing on the order of 10% of GDP for the entire group of LIDC countries. In dollar terms, this shortfall amounts to \$300 to \$400 billion per year for the entire group of nations. The shortfall is even higher for the poorer countries within the group, because the increment in needed budget outlays is even larger than 14% of GDP.

**Low-Income Developing Countries (LIDCs):
Additional Spending Needed in 2030 to Achieve High Outcomes in Selected Sectors**
(Percent of Different GDP Aggregates)

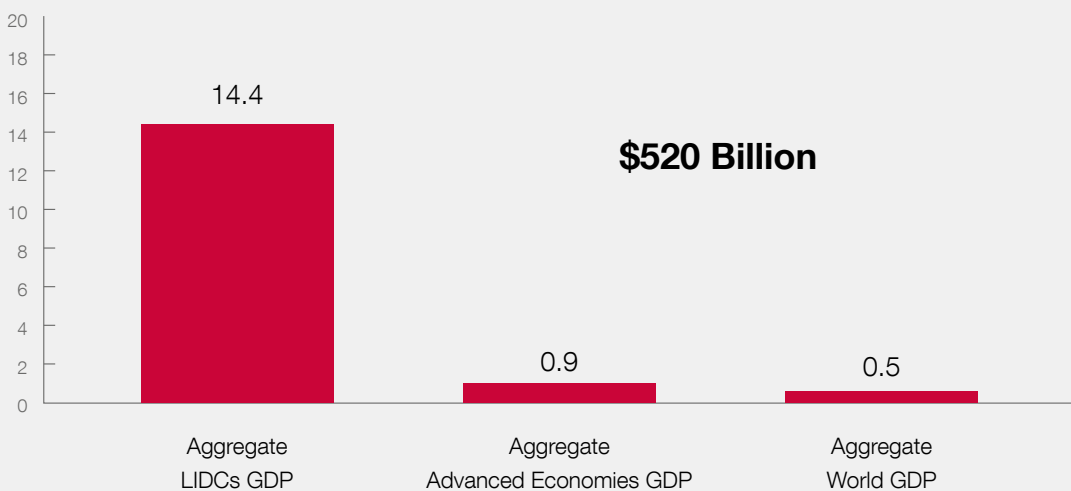


Figure 3. Low-income developing countries (LIDCs) need to spend an additional 14.4% of GDP to achieve specific SDG targets. That shortfall could be met with contributions of 0.9% of the advanced economies' GDP, or just 0.5% of aggregate world GDP. Source: IMF Staff Calculations.

The IMF helpfully put the shortfall in perspective by noting that \$300 to \$400 billion per year is on the order of a mere 0.9% of the combined GDP of the advanced economies (AEs) and 0.5% of world GDP. That is, the SDG financing shortfall for 1.7 billion people comes to less than one-half of 1% of world output! Yet raising that incremental sum, even such a modest proportion of global output, has proven to be impossible. The rich countries are instead turning their backs on the poorest countries. The United States is worst in this regard, willfully cutting development aid despite being by far the largest rich nation in the world.

CASE STUDY

The Fight against AIDS, TB and Malaria

Three epidemic diseases—AIDS, TB and malaria—currently claim the lives of around 1.7 million people per year, and cause suffering for many more. Yet each of these epidemic diseases can be substantially controlled, bringing deaths to near zero. Scientific action plans have been identified for each of the three diseases, to demonstrate how the epidemics could be decisively ended by 2030, in line with the aspirations of SDG 3, healthy lives for all.

The good news is that the cost of comprehensive control of the three diseases is not very high, roughly \$101 billion for the three-year period 2020–2022, or roughly \$34 billion per year. The domestic budget revenues of the affected developing countries can provide around \$46 billion of the needed \$100 billion, leaving a three-year financing gap of around \$55 billion. Of that amount, \$37 billion is currently expected from existing donors during 2020–2022, leaving a three-year funding gap of some \$18 billion, or just \$6 billion per year (Figure 4). Yet finding that \$6 billion is proving to be extremely difficult, even though it marks an enormous difference in lives saved, new cases of the three diseases and prospects for ending the epidemics.

Financing Gap for Controlling HIV, TB and Malaria 2021–2023

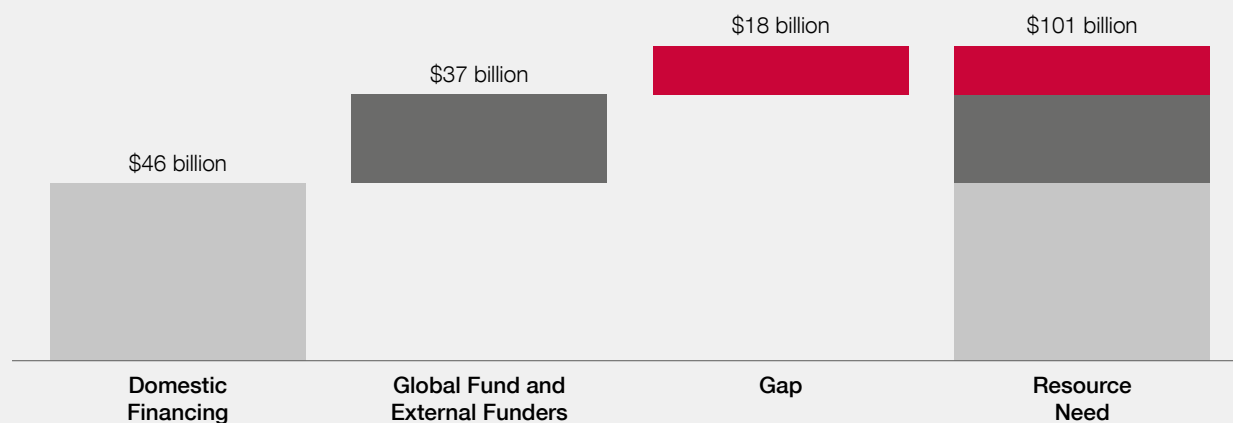


Figure 4. Domestic external financing expected for controlling HIV, TB, and malaria in 2021–2023 leaves an \$18 billion financing gap, or \$6 billion per year. Source: Data from The Global Fund’s “Investment Case Update” (January 2019).

THE WISDOM OF SAINT AMBROSE, THE MAJOR FAITH TRADITIONS AND GLOBAL WEALTH TODAY

In his magisterial encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI wrote movingly and persuasively about the obligations of the rich to help the poor. The 1967 encyclical emerged during the first UN Decade of Development, in the period when dozens of former colonies in Africa and Asia were winning their political independence for the first time since the 19th century. Pope Paul VI called on the world to help these countries in justice, compassion and mercy, given their extreme poverty and high disease burden.

In the encyclical, Pope Paul VI elucidates the Church's doctrine of the universal destination of goods, which holds that the world was created for everybody, not just for the rich. Human rights and dignity must take precedence over private property rights. Private ownership is never inviolate, but instead is subject to the moral law of universal dignity and human needs. In this context, Pope Paul VI quotes Saint Ambrose (339–397), one of the most renowned doctors of the church, who said, “You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.”

Pope Paul explains Saint Ambrose's statement this way:

Private property does not constitute for anyone an absolute and unconditioned right. No one is justified in keeping for his exclusive use what he does not need, when others lack necessities. In a word, “according to the traditional doctrine as found in the Fathers of the Church and the great theologians, the right to property must never be exercised to the detriment of the common good.” If there should arise a conflict “between acquired private rights and primary community exigencies,” it is the responsibility of public authorities “to look for a solution, with the active participation of individuals and social groups.”

The doctrine of the universal destination of goods is more vital than ever today because the global economy has created an astounding “winner take all” dynamic that is leading to unprecedented wealth accumulation among the world's richest individuals. As Oxfam has demonstrated, the world's richest 26 individuals have a combined net worth of \$1.6 trillion, equal to the combined wealth of the bottom half of the planet (3.8 billion people). *Forbes* magazine has calculated that there are 2,208 billionaires (as of March 2018), with a combined net worth of \$9.1 trillion. Jeffrey Bezos, founder and part owner of Amazon, has a net worth today (February 2, 2019) estimated at \$135 billion. The number of billionaires has tripled since 2000, and their estimated combined wealth, adjusted for inflation, has increased roughly fivefold in just 18 years.

The billionaires might also reflect upon the Hindu tradition's doctrine of renunciation. The first two verses of the Isha Upanishad read, “This entire universe, moving and unmoving, is enfolded in God. Renounce and enjoy” (translation from the scholar Anantanand Rambachan). In other words, because the universe is a sacred reality, humanity is called to enjoy the planet, its resources, and any wealth derived from it, with open and generous hands. Exploitation and hoarding reflect a greed incompatible with charity, gratitude and enjoyment of the planet's bounty.

Distributive justice and compassion are similarly at the heart of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and the other great world faiths. Jewish biblical law enjoins the landowner to set aside part of the harvest for the poor:

When you reap the harvest of your Land, you shall not completely remove the corner of your field during your harvesting, and you shall not gather up the gleanings of your harvest. [Rather,] you shall leave these for the poor person and for the stranger. I am the Lord, your God. (Leviticus 23:22)

With its key concept of “interrelatedness,” Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of compassion and donation. Acknowledging our interdependence with others promotes the virtues of compassion, self-giving and generosity. The Buddhist tradition has also generated its own mode of economic reflection, which highlights simplicity, minimizing suffering and violence and the simplification of desires, against the typical consumerism of modern economies.

In Islam, the practice of zakat calls on those with incomes above a minimum to give a portion (often one-fortieth) to the poor. Zakat is one of the five pillars of Islam, regarded as second in importance only to prayer. The word *zakat* itself derives from the word for “purification”: zakat constitutes a purification of one’s wealth through giving. Alms in this sense are given not only for the sake of the poor, but also for the moral and spiritual health of the one who gives.

Indeed, St. Ambrose’s vision of justice, applied to merely 2,208 of the world’s 7.6 billion people, could readily solve the extreme deprivation of the world’s poorest 1.7 billion people. If the combined net wealth of the billionaires could be treated as an endowment put to work to fight extreme poverty, the \$9.1 trillion would generate an annual flow of income of some \$450 billion per year, assuming an annual payout rate of 5%. This sum exceeds the financing gap identified by the IMF for 59 low-income developing countries! The \$450 billion, therefore, if well directed, could ensure universal basic health coverage; universal education through secondary school; the end of AIDS, TB and malaria; and access to clean water, sanitation and modern energy services.

III. The SDGs and Six Deep Societal Transformations

According to the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, the 17 SDGs can most usefully be understood as requiring *six transformations* in society. These six transformations, if successfully achieved, would enable every part of the planet to achieve sustainable development, including the targets of the 17 SDGs.

EDUCATION, GENDER AND INEQUALITY

SDG 4 calls on all countries to achieve universal secondary school completion by 2030. This will require increased investments in early childhood development and pre-K programs that have been shown to boost the cognitive and emotional development of children, with persistent effects into adulthood. Preschool education also helps reduce inequalities in opportunity among children. In parallel, countries need to ensure primary and secondary school completion for all, which *inter alia* will require enhanced teacher training and curriculum development.

Another pillar of this transformation is promoting gender equality (SDG 5) and social inclusion (SDG 10). Among other endeavors, this will require measures to end discrimination in the workplace as well as other antidiscrimination policies and standards. Equal access to high-quality education, healthcare and other services is, of course, critical for reducing inequalities, and it needs to be complemented with social safety nets.

In addition to improved education, social safety nets and antidiscrimination measures, improved labor standards form another pillar for reducing inequalities (SDG 10). The International Labour Organization has developed detailed standards that every country and employer should meet. Of particular importance should be efforts to end all forms of modern slavery, trafficking and child labor, which continue to be prevalent in poor and rich countries alike (SDG 8, Target 8.7).

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND DEMOGRAPHY

The SDGs shift the focus towards universal health coverage (SDG 3) as well as the social and environmental determinants of health and well-being. They frame health as a basic need and a human right. A central pillar of the health, well-being and demography transformation is universal health coverage, which will also contribute directly to SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 1 (no poverty). Universal health coverage requires a core, publicly financed health system that integrates preventive, therapeutic and palliative services. Health systems also require integrated information systems along with real-time epidemic and disease surveillance and control. In many countries community health programs have been shown to improve health outcomes significantly.

The health system must offer a range of services. Of critical priority are interventions for maternal, newborn and child health. To control the spread of infectious diseases, health systems must offer effective prevention and treatment. And they need to integrate noncommunicable disease control, including mental health treatment and basic surgery.

CLEAN ENERGY AND INDUSTRY

The world will require growing use of energy together with a decisive drop in CO₂ emissions. The climatology is clear. To have at least a two-thirds probability (a “likely” outcome) of remaining below 2°C in global warming requires that the cumulative net emissions of CO₂ in the 21st century should be no more than 600 gigatons (Gt) of CO₂ (SDG 13). Yet the current emissions from energy use alone are on the order of 40 Gt per year, meaning that humanity has roughly 15 years remaining of energy-related CO₂ emissions at the current global rate. To the energy-related emissions we need to add the emissions due to land-use change, considered in the next transformation section.

Available national and global pathways for decarbonizing the energy system suggest three major pillars for action. First, countries need to ensure universal access to zero-carbon electricity and other clean fuels (SDG 7). This will require a shift from fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) to zero-carbon sources, including wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, ocean and others. Second, countries need to improve energy efficiency in final energy use. This includes transport (e.g., lighter and more efficient vehicles, car sharing, autonomous vehicles), buildings (heating and cooling, thermal insulation), industrial energy use and household appliances. Third, countries need to electrify current uses of fossil fuel energy outside of power generation, such as internal combustion engines (through electric or hydrogen vehicles), boilers and heaters in buildings (through heat pumps) and various industrial processes, such as steel and cement production.

In addition to energy decarbonization, all nations must sharply cut industrial pollutants of the air, water and land (SDG 12). Key industrial pollutants include methane, nitrous oxide and sulfur dioxide, as well as organic and other inorganic pollutants. Water management, life-cycle approaches and other tools of circular economy can increase resource efficiency and decrease pollution. The circular economy also provides a framework for 21st-century industrialization strategies in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD, LAND, WATER AND OCEANS

The fourth transformation is in land use and food systems. The current patterns of land use, mainly related to food production, are unsustainable in three ways. First, today’s agricultural systems are major drivers of environmental change. They account for about a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions (SDG 13) and over 90% of scarcity-weighted water use (SDG 6), and they are the major drivers of biodiversity loss (SDGs 14 and 15), eutrophication through nutrient overload and pollution of water and air. Second, at the same time, the food system is vulnerable to environmental changes now under way, through the increasing severity of droughts, floods, disease and land degradation caused, in part, by climate change. Similarly, most ocean and freshwater fisheries are overexploited. Finally, today’s food system does not produce healthy diets, leading to persistent hunger, widespread malnutrition and a growing obesity pandemic.

The implications are clear. The world will need a major transformation of food systems and land use to mitigate human-caused environmental degradation, build resilience into food production and achieve better health outcomes. This in turn will require efficient and resilient agricultural systems, the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, a shift to healthier and more plant-based diets and improved land-use regulation and management.

SMART CITIES AND TRANSPORT

Cities today are home to around 55% of humanity and 70% of global economic output. By 2050, cities will be home to around 70% of humanity and perhaps 85% of global output. What happens in cities, therefore, will determine the well-being of most of humanity and the prospects for sustainable development. It is therefore no accident that the world's national governments assigned SDG 11 to sustainable cities, meaning cities that are economically productive, socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable.

As a first priority, cities need to develop sustainable urban infrastructure. This includes an efficient transport system; universal access to reliable and low-cost electricity, safe water and sewerage; recycling and other sustainable waste management; and high-speed, low-cost broadband connectivity to support businesses and public service delivery. These should be deployed according to a plan that takes account of likely population growth. Safe and open green spaces, infrastructure for cycling and walking and higher-density settlements increase resource efficiency and quality of life. Smart urban networks can provide real-time monitoring and management of safety, traffic, energy use and other services.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND E-GOVERNANCE

The greatest single technological enabler of sustainable development in the coming years will be the digital revolution, constituted by the ongoing advances in computing, connectivity, digitization of information, machine learning, robotics and artificial intelligence (AI). The digital revolution rivals the steam engine, internal combustion engine and electrification in its pervasive effects on all parts of the economy and society. The rapid pace of advance continues, with imminent breakthrough prospects for AI, quantum computing, virtual reality, 5G broadband and other technologies. These include:

- Universal access to high-quality, low-cost mobile broadband
- Digital transition and connectivity of all government facilities
- Online national systems for healthcare and education
- Online e-finance and e-payments to facilitate trade and business services
- Universal online identification for official purposes (banking, taxation, registration, etc.)
- Regulatory security for online identity and privacy
- Income redistribution to address income inequalities arising from digital scale-up
- Tax and regulatory systems to avoid monopolization of internet services
- Online data governance and interoperability provisions
- Democratic oversight of cutting-edge digital technologies

IV. The Decisive Role of Multi-Religious Action to Achieve the SDGs

Multi-religious action is essential to the achievement of the SDGs. Every major religion is committed to the core values espoused by the SDGs: human dignity and flourishing, the rights of the poor, social justice and peace. Every major religion has unique and significant assets to bring to the fulfillment of the SDGs, including a profound code of ethics; a daily dialogue with all parts of society; face-to-face engagement with billions of people around the world, including the world's poorest people; vital institutions of education, health, charity and environmental protection; and the ability to teach and disseminate the vital information needed for global success in sustainable development. Here is a brief summary of some of the key practical pathways for religious engagement with the SDGs.

ETHICS IN ACTION

The world's major religions are the repositories of humanity's core moral codes and ethical guideposts. Fortunately, there is a deep congruence among the religions in the core ethical precepts regarding human dignity, the rights of all people to meet basic needs, the essential value of compassion and service to others and respect for and stewardship of the natural environment. The Ethics in Action initiative, hosted by the Chancellor of the Pontifical Academies of Sciences and Social Sciences, Bishop Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo and with the partnership of several faith groups led by *Religions for Peace*, demonstrated the ability of a multi-faith leadership group to formulate agreed ethical principles and guidelines for action to achieve the SDGs.² This multi-faith consensus should now be further strengthened and broadened so that religious leaders across all major faiths and regions will become leaders of the SDGs in line with the deep teachings of their respective faiths.

RELIGIONS AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Religious communities can convene the key stakeholder groups in society needed to achieve the SDGs. The Catholic Church, for example, has convened scientists, mayors, judges, ethicists and faith leaders of many religions to support integral and human development, guided by Pope Francis' call for a plan for our common home in his encyclical *Laudato Si'*. The Pontifical Academy played a decisive role in gathering experts to support the SDGs and Paris Agreement, and Pope Francis played a key role in helping to build a global consensus around both the SDGs and the climate agreement. Other religions are now convening religious leaders and scientists to work hand in hand on sustainable development initiatives, with powerful benefits for society.

2 "Ethics in Action – Third Meeting *Refugees and Migrants*," http://www.endslavery.va/content/dam/endslavery/booklet/booklet_eia3.pdf, Web.

WORK WITH LOCAL CONGREGATIONS

Achieving the SDGs will require that people around the world know of the goals and understand their relevance and potential benefits for their own families, communities and nations, as well as for the world. The SDGs should be explained from the pulpits of all faiths, to help all of humanity to understand their human rights and the global quest to end poverty, promote social justice and protect the natural environment.

DIRECT SERVICE PROVISION

All major faiths play a vital role in direct service provision, for education, healthcare and social support services, often with special attention to the most vulnerable, including the young, the elderly, the disabled, migrants, minority groups and the marginalized. In so doing, the religious communities strive to live the faith of “leave no one behind,” even when societies are misguided enough to cast the vulnerable aside.

The SDGs are first and foremost about vital social services for all, including social protection for the extreme poor (SDG 1) and the hungry (SDG 2); healthcare for all (SDG 3); education for all (SDG 4); water and sanitation for all (SDG 6); and modern and safe energy services for all (SDG 7). Religious providers of these social services should team up with governments and international donor agencies in a systematic way to ensure that the universal aspirations of the SDGs (truly leaving *no one* behind) can be successfully fulfilled.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

As Pope Francis has frequently reminded us, our greatest vulnerability today is the “globalization of indifference,” meaning humanity’s neglect of even its own survival. We are lost in a world of online imagery, substance and behavioral addictions, political demagoguery, commercial distractions and rampant consumerism to the point that we neglect the essential needs of our communities, to say nothing of the needs of the poor and vulnerable. We are manipulated by fear rather than inspired by compassion.

The world’s religions have a unique role to play in overcoming the globalization of indifference, by joining together in the clarion call for human survival and well-being; by demonstrating the common bonds across races, religions, classes and ethnicities; by proving through their good works the ability of our societies to leave no one behind.

In *Laudato Si’*, Pope Francis invited a dialogue among all people, believers of all faiths and nonbelievers alike, in search of a path to authentic human and sustainable development. He noted that our interdependence obliges us to search for a common plan for humanity and the planet. By raising the voices of all of the world’s great faiths in unison, the multi-faith community will be able to overcome the indifference that holds us hostage, drown out the haters and the fearmongers and open the way to a new generation of collective action for the common good that will inspire people around the world.

CARING FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

Advancing *Shared Well-Being*
by Protecting the Earth



Executive Summary

This moment in human history is unprecedented. Industrial economies are impacting our planet so extensively that geologists are considering designating a new geological epoch named for humans: the Anthropocene. For people of belief, this possibility calls for deep reflection on humanity's place in Creation. What other species can impact its nest so massively, in such a geologically short period of time?

THE CHALLENGE

The sustainability crisis consists of dozens of interconnected environmental, social and economic issues. Ecological Footprint (EF) analysis demonstrates that industrial development, characterized by use of fossil fuel energy and high levels of waste, is not viable in the long term. It shows that humanity's demand for nature's goods and services is much greater than nature can supply—about 70 percent greater, in fact. The excess demand is met by drawing down nature's reserves: using groundwater, forests and topsoil, for example, faster than they can be regenerated. These practices cannot continue indefinitely, because reserves are finite. Overuse of resources is now evident across a number of environmental sectors:



Climate change

Our planet is warming at unnatural rates. Sea levels are rising, storms are more frequent and intense and oceans are increasingly acidic as they absorb more carbon dioxide. The world's nations agreed in 2015 to limit global emissions and cap global average temperature at no more than 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, with 1.5 degrees a much-preferred target. This could require that emissions peak by 2020, then be cut in half each decade thereafter.

Because societies have been slow to cut emissions, some scientists and interest groups now call for using “geoengineering” to limit temperature rise. The strategies proposed involve risks that could be monumental for the planet. The question is whether the human family will finally commit to the hard work of emissions reductions or resort to risky geoengineering options.



Air pollution

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 90 percent of people worldwide breathe air containing high levels of pollutants, and that around seven million people worldwide die each year from polluted outdoor and indoor air. The problem varies by development level: in low- and middle-income countries, 97 percent of cities of 100,000 people or more do not meet WHO air quality guidelines, compared to 49 percent in wealthy countries.



Water scarcity

Water supply is fixed, but demand grows with expanding populations and economies, and supplies are disrupted by a changing climate. Some 36 percent of the world's population lives in water-scarce regions, and the share could reach 50 percent by 2050. Meanwhile, 20 percent of the world's groundwater deposits are pumped faster than they can be recharged by rainfall, meaning that groundwater levels are falling. Loss of irrigation—the controlled application of water to crops—could mean large losses of food: irrigation is used on only 16 percent of arable land worldwide, but it delivers 44 percent of global crop production.



Tropical deforestation

Tropical deforestation is a major environmental crisis, and a major contributor to climate change. Data shows a loss of tree cover equivalent to the area of France, Germany and the UK combined in the last decade alone. A large and increasing proportion of this deforestation took place in tropical countries, driven by forest clearing – much of it illegal – to cultivate global commodities such as soy, beef, palm oil and pulp and paper.



Soil degradation

Soil health is declining on all continents, which affects a wide range of associated issues, from food supply to water availability to climate change. Studies in the 1990s and 2000s suggested that some 15 to 24 percent of land globally has suffered physical damage (e.g., erosion) or chemical damage (salt loading) at levels that reduce productivity. Soil degradation unfolds even as the demand for food continues to increase. One out of nine of the human family is chronically hungry today, and hunger at the global level is increasing. Yet demand for food is forecast to increase by 50 percent between 2013 and 2050.

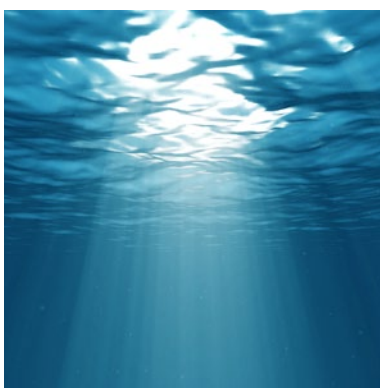


Biodiversity loss

Many biologists assert that a mass extinction is underway, the sixth in the history of Earth, and the first caused by humans. Species are disappearing at many times the natural rate: the International Union for the Conservation of Nature reports that 25 percent of mammal species; 13 percent of bird species, and 41 percent of amphibian species are threatened with extinction. The number of threatened mammals, birds and amphibian species is up by double-digit percentages since 1996/1998.

Ocean degradation

The world's oceans are overexploited and degraded at levels not seen in millions of years. Some 33 percent of marine fisheries are fished beyond sustainable levels, up from 10 percent in 1974. Oceans are acidifying and coral reefs, rich in biodiversity, are in serious decline.



A RELIGIOUS-SPIRITUAL RESPONSE

People of faith possess a broad set of spiritual, financial, infrastructural, political and social assets that could, conceivably, help create sustainable communities and economies. These include a large number of adherents who meet regularly and form deep relational ties; physical assets such as land and buildings; meaningful amounts of investment capital; and, most powerfully, moral teaching and spiritual tools such as prayer, song and liturgical practices. Of course, religious and spiritual traditions exist for reasons deeper than creating societal change. But the interests of people of belief and advocates of sustainability arguably align closely on a range of issues. For this reason, believers in many traditions are exploring how sustainable policies, practices and lifestyles might fit comfortably within their tradition.

To maximize effectiveness and societal impact, faith and spiritual traditions can tap their existing local, regional, national and global structures. These structures can increase impact by organizing to operate efficiently, in two ways. First, they can coordinate their units at various hierarchical levels to operate effectively. Actions loop around and through each of the levels in ways that are reciprocal and reinforcing. In this way, the various levels learn from one another and avoid duplication of effort. Second, each tradition can act in concert with communities of other traditions, eliminating duplicated effort. Multi-religious cooperation softens discord among faith or spiritual traditions and highlights complementary strengths.

In addition, religious and spiritual traditions can form partnerships with other, often non-religious, entities to drive social change. Engaging with a diverse set of partners increases effectiveness, broadens one's perspective and strengthens the web of enduring civic relationships. For the modern environmental sustainability movement, potential partners for faith and spirituality communities are usually easy to identify. Local- and national-level environmental, conservation, animal advocacy and sustainability groups often welcome collaboration with people of belief, offering entrée to existing programs. For their part, communities of believers bring to partnerships any of the wide range of assets identified earlier, as well as intangible strengths such as commitment and credibility.

The effort to build sustainable economies requires a massive shift in economies worldwide. This is a task of civil society, as well as government and business. Faith and spiritual traditions have unique and powerful contributions to make to this effort. Their clear and committed voices are urgently needed.

Introduction

In 2016, an international working group of geologists recommended that a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene, be formally added to the geological record of time. Their reasoning: artifacts of human activity—including plastic, aluminum and the ash from fossil fuel burning—are now embedded in sediments all over our planet. Because geologists are the scientists who define the epochs, eras and eons that make up Earth's calendar, the recommendation was newsworthy.

It was also sobering. For people of belief in particular, the call to recognize the first human-driven epoch is cause for deep reflection on humanity's place in Creation. On one hand, the vote is a tip of the hat to the vastness and range of human power. No other species is as skilled at building its nest as we humans. When we act as conscious, spirit-filled creators, building with an eye to the common good, we do terrific work. At the same time, the vote surely demands of us humility and soul-searching. What other species would soil its home, on a planetary scale, in the geological equivalent of a blink of an eye?

The environmental and social damage created by industrial development has given rise to a values-driven corrective known as sustainable development. While sustainability headlines focus on technologies such as solar panels or policies like the Paris Agreement on climate, the heart of sustainability is a shift in values that reveals a new worldview and a new understanding of progress. In the sustainability vision, the natural environment is protected and nurtured as the foundation of all economic activity, while human well-being and equality are central to economic design. Indeed, citizens and policymakers in a sustainable society would recoil at economies that treat waste, excess, environmental decline and mass poverty as the unavoidable price of progress.

The moral foundation of sustainable development creates an exciting opening for religious and spiritual communities at this moment in history. People of faith and spirituality, fluent in the language of values, bring a unique and indispensable voice to the sustainability movement that complements scientific arguments. Secular critics rightly decry the waste of resources in a consumer society, but people of belief offer a robust additional critique: that materialism and its cousins, greed and selfishness, are destructive of the human spirit and degrade our capacity to *love*. Or consider the believers' testament to the intrinsic worth of the natural world: it adds a layer of reflection and understanding to the biologist's assessment of, say, the ecological value of a newly found species.

Thus, people of belief have a critical role to play in building a sustainable world. This document is meant to assist believers of many religious or faith traditions in claiming that role. It offers a brief orientation to sustainability issues, a review of believers' contributions and their possible relevance for sustainability and an exploration of how believers might take action. Each section, starting with this introduction, ends with a set of guiding questions to stimulate discussion. The goal is to persuade communities of faith and spirituality of their critical role in creating a new civilization.

Scientists have not yet decided to declare a new geological epoch. But whether or not they formally name this historical moment for humanity, our challenge is to make the modern era worthy of us, by establishing a civilization characterized by wisdom and fairness. The world's faith and spiritual traditions, as ardent defenders of these values, are indispensable to this effort.

Guiding Questions

Guiding questions and the objective of each are listed following each section of this paper, as an aid to discussion.

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? What is my vision of a sustainable world? A sustainable nation? A sustainable community?	Clarify and articulate the meaning of sustainability for readers.
? What overlap do I see between my vision of sustainability and the teachings of my faith or spiritual tradition?	Articulate any spiritual basis for readers' understanding of sustainability.
? Where do human beings fit within my vision, and what is the role and purpose of human beings according to my faith tradition? What is the place of human beings in our world, compared to the rest of the natural world, living and non-living?	Identify whether the reader or the reader's tradition believe that humans have a special status on our planet, and if so, what responsibilities this might carry.
? How does my tradition conceptualize human progress? How would it assess human progress over the past century or more?	Identify the assertions and hidden assumptions in the reader's tradition regarding human progress, and evaluate the advances of the 21 st century.
? Is my understanding of humanity's purpose reflected in the social and economic constructs that surround us? If not, how far are human societies from the vision of development held by my faith tradition?	Identify how large a gap, if any, exists between the social and economic norms set out by my tradition, and our lived reality.
? How should human technological capacities be assessed? Should they be circumscribed in any way? If so, how?	Articulate guidelines for the adoption of new technology, inspired by spiritual and faith traditions.

I. Environmental Issues

The Big Picture

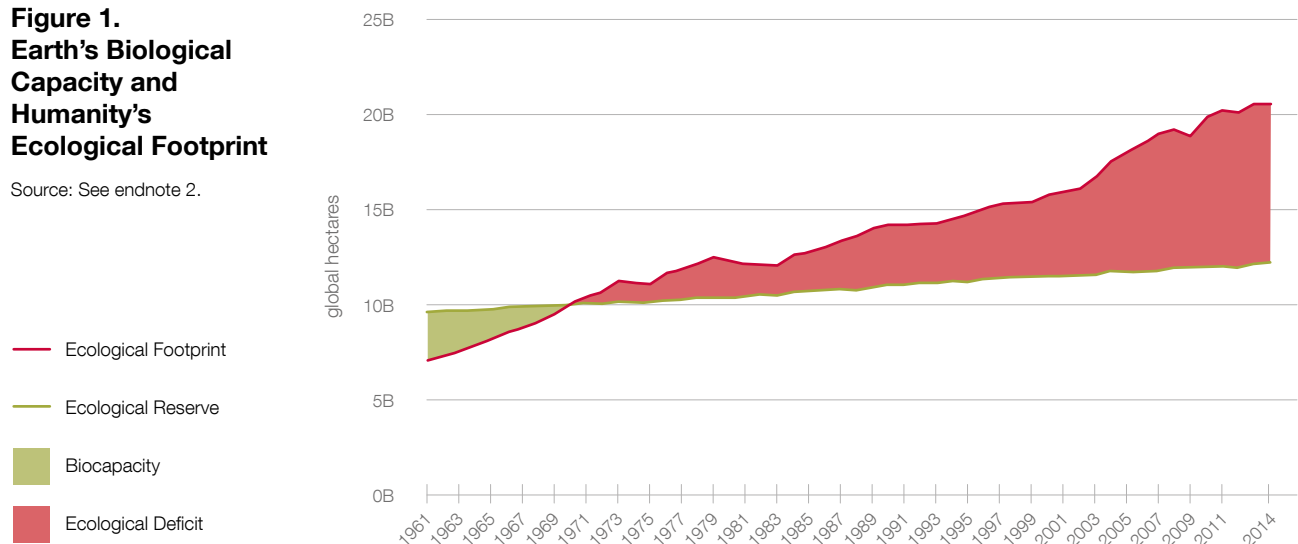
The sustainability crisis consists of dozens of interconnected environmental issues, from climate change to water scarcity to biodiversity loss, as well as social and economic issues such as inequality and hunger. Such diverse concerns resist being summarized into a single sustainability metric, but a global and long-term perspective gives a sense of the challenge of this historical moment. Big-picture studies such as the 1974 Limits to Growth model, the 2009 Planetary Boundaries research, and Ecological Footprint analysis use different methodologies to assess sustainability, but all draw the same conclusion: the industrial model of development, characterized by heavy use of fossil fuels, linear flows of materials and high levels of waste, is not a viable long-term development strategy for the human family.

This overview discussion will use Ecological Footprint (EF) analysis to describe the big picture. EF analysis compares humanity's demand for nature with the supply of nature's goods and services. Any mismatch between demand and supply is a proxy measure of unsustainability. Demand is measured by examining human consumption of renewable resources such as food, fish and wood, as well as services provided by nature, such as absorption of carbon dioxide. The supply of nature, called "biocapacity," is the sum of green areas available to meet our demand.

The Global Footprint Network (GFN), a sustainability research center that specializes in EF analysis, calculates that humanity has been in "ecological deficit," demanding 68 percent more in nature's goods and services than nature can sustainably supply, and that deficit has been the norm since around 1970. (See Figure 1.) Indeed, humanity's current demand for Earth's biological goods and services in an ongoing way would require 1.7 planet Earths.¹

Figure 1.
Earth's Biological
Capacity and
Humanity's
Ecological Footprint

Source: See endnote 2.



BOX 1. OTHER BIG-PICTURE ANALYSES

The Ecological Footprint is a particularly intuitive tool for understanding the unsustainable trends of modern economies. Other analyses complement EF's findings:

- The 1974 Limits to Growth modeling work showed that continuation of trends in resource use, population growth and environmental stress could lead to overuse of resources and collapse in economies before the middle of the 21st century.
- The 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment found that two-thirds of services provided by nature to humankind, including provision of fish, fresh water and a stable climate, are being degraded or used unsustainably.
- The 2009 Planetary Boundaries framework reports that four areas—climate change, nitrogen and phosphorus pollution, land system change and biodiversity loss—have crossed thresholds that put human activity into an “unsafe operating zone” and could disrupt major systems on which human economies depend.

How are we humans able to use the resources of 1.7 Earths when only a single planet is available to us? By raiding nature's savings accounts: cutting forests faster than they grow back, over-pumping groundwater and catching more fish than oceans can regenerate. This overindulgence, which GFN calls “ecological debt,” cannot continue indefinitely, just as a savings account cannot be drawn down forever. The impact of draining natural capital is already evident in many places. In China and parts of the US, irrigated agriculture has been abandoned because wells have run dry. And in parts of the north Atlantic and myriad other fishing areas, wild catch is no longer possible because fish stocks have been depleted.

EF analysis is also helpful in demonstrating inequality in the use of nature's services. Wealthier countries tend to have larger per capita footprints—larger appetites for nature's goods and services—than developing ones. Table 1 shows the Ecological Footprint per person of various country groups, and the extent to which each country overshoots its biocapacity.

Table 1. Ecological Footprint Per Person of Country Groups by Income Level

Country Group	Biocapacity (Supply) (global hectares* per person)	Ecological Footprint (Demand) (global hectares* per person)	Overshoot (Deficit) (global hectares* per person)
High Income	2.9	6.1	-3.2
Upper Middle Income	2.3	3.5	-1.2
Lower Middle Income	0.9	1.3	-0.5
Low Income	1.1	1.1	-0.1
WORLD	1.7	2.8	-1.2

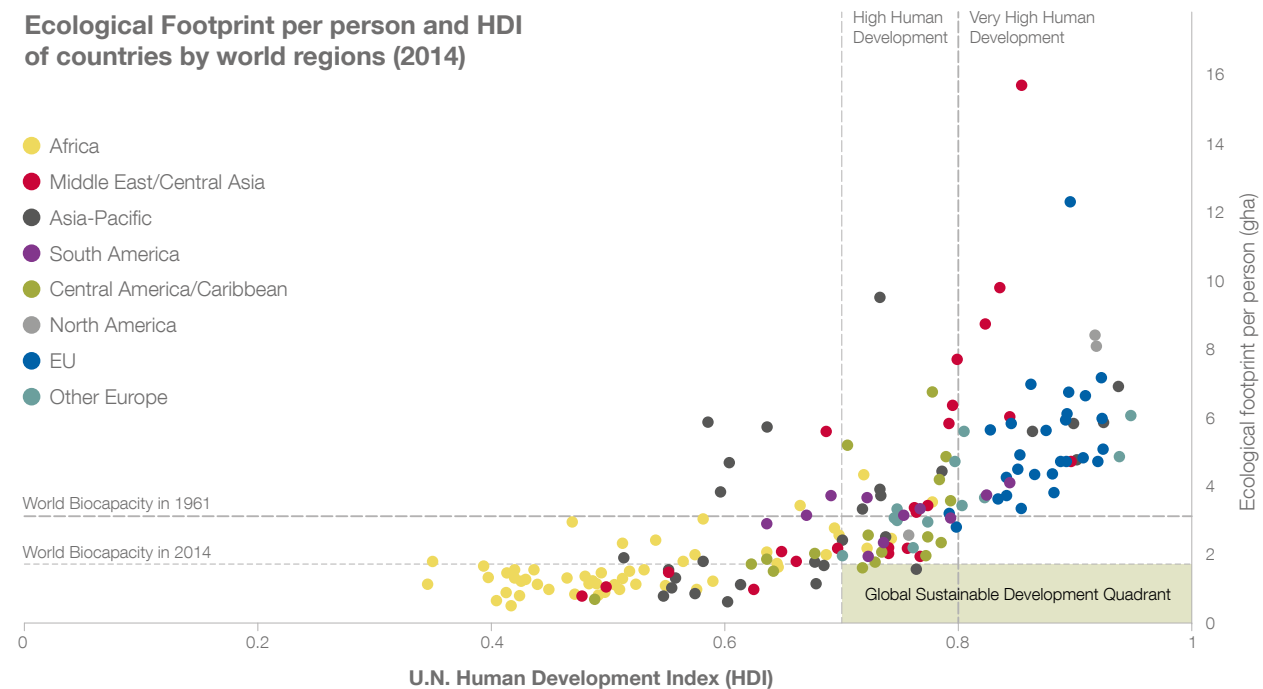
*A “global hectare” is a GFN innovation that standardizes biological areas based on average productivity. This allows different kinds of biological productivity—for example, corn produced on cropland and carbon absorbed by forestland—to be directly compared.

Source: See endnote 3.

Finally, EF analysis is useful for clarifying the meaning of sustainable development. GFN and the United Nations Development Programme have demonstrated that a clear tradeoff exists in industrial societies between human well-being and ecological health: more developed countries tend to have larger ecological demand—larger footprints—as shown in Figure 2. The bottom axis shows development level, from lowest (on the left side) to highest. The vertical axis shows ecological

impact, from least (at the bottom) to greatest. The sweet spot, where countries have a high level of development and a modest environmental impact, is the green rectangle. It is nearly empty, a visual indictment of the modern development model. The rectangle also suggests what a sustainable development paradigm needs to accomplish—care for all as well as for the planet that sustains us.

Figure 2. Development Level and Environmental Impact



Source: Ecological Footprint per person: National Footprint Accounts 2018 Edition, Global Footprint Network
Human Development Index: Human Development Report, UNDP 2016

Source: See endnote 4.

The Ecological Footprint, together with other global-level, long-term studies, demonstrates that our planet is overextended and stressed, and that humanity's approach to development requires a creative overhaul. To add specificity to this big-picture perspective, we turn next to a review of various environmental sectors.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION

OBJECTIVE

? From a spiritual perspective, how does my tradition evaluate the collective evidence of human overreach, from mass extinctions and climate change to ecological footprints larger than the planet's capacity to support? Is this era unusual in the level of concern and response required of religious and spiritual traditions?

Identify the level of awareness of this unprecedented moment in human history, and the level of my tradition's response to this moment.

? How many planets would be needed if everyone on the planet adopted my lifestyle? (Use the Ecological Footprint calculator at <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/resources/footprint-calculator>).

Quantify one's own Ecological Footprint and clarify the level to which one lives within or outside the limits of Earth's capacity to provide for humanity.

? Which parts of my footprint require personal changes? Which parts require changes to social or economic structures such as availability of renewable energy or adequate public transport?

Build skill in seeing sustainability as both a structural and personal challenge.

? Should the Ecological Footprint have any place in my congregation's assessment of environmental responsibility? Should it have any place in my congregation's teaching, rituals, or outreach?

Clarify for oneself whether sustainability is a proper focus for faith and spiritual traditions.

? Review Figure 2. Sustainable development is found in the blue rectangle, with high human development and low environmental impact, yet few nations are found there. What principles or teachings does my tradition offer that could help to move my country or community there?

Imagine and articulate how a sustainable nation or community might achieve high levels of human development with low environmental impact. Articulate what faith and spiritual traditions might contribute to this challenge.

Sectoral Review

The big-picture challenge described by the Ecological Footprint is comprised of a series of sectoral dysfunctions, in water, forests, biodiversity, and the like. We begin with climate change because it is global in scope, requires urgent attention, and dominates the environmental news. But the other issues discussed are critically important as well (and most are connected to climate). Indeed, if climate were not a concern, the world's economies would still be described as unsustainable because of the grave issues identified across each of these other sectors.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is arguably the most urgent issue on the entire sustainability agenda because of its global and highly disruptive impacts. The historic nature of the climate challenge is captured in a 2018 *New York Times* article describing a report for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the international group of scientists who study climate change:

A landmark report from the United Nations' scientific panel on climate change paints a far more dire picture of the immediate consequences of climate change than previously thought and says that avoiding the damage requires transforming the world economy at a speed and scale that has "no documented historic precedent."⁵

Overcoming societal lethargy regarding climate, rapidly, may be the greatest challenge of our generation.

The Challenge

Since the Industrial Revolution started in 1750, industrial and other activities have generated "greenhouse gases" such as carbon dioxide, some of which linger in the atmosphere and act like a blanket, trapping heat. The trapped heat makes the climate more volatile—storms are more frequent and intense, and heat waves, droughts and floods are more numerous.

A United Nations assemblage of scientists, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), has issued five assessments of the state of the climate since 1990, each increasingly urgent in calling for action to stabilize emissions and curb the rise in temperatures. In response to IPCC analyses, the world's nations agreed in Paris in 2015 to develop national plans that would limit global emissions and cap global average temperature at less than two degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, with 1.5 degrees a preferred cap. The 2015 conference also commissioned a special study, requested by nations most likely to be hurt by sea-level rise, to explore the value in striving to stay within 1.5 degrees. What difference could half a degree make?

The special report, released in October 2018, made clear that two degrees of warming would cause far greater environmental and economic impacts than 1.5 degrees. From the health of coral reefs to the productivity of farms, people and nature would be better served in preventing warming to the greatest extent possible. (See Table 2.) For example, crop yields, which have generally increased in many regions of the world since the 1960s, could well decline in this century, by more than twice as much for corn under the high cap as under the low cap. After the special report, the two degree threshold often cited in media reports is now considered by some scientists, policymakers, and advocates to be too lax a goal. The emerging preference for 1.5 degrees

is particularly sobering in light of this stubborn fact: without action on climate, the Earth is on track to warm by well over three degrees.

Table 2. Impacts of 1.5° and 2° Increases in Global Average Surface Temperature

Area of Concern	1.5°C	2.0°C	2° compared to 1.5°
Ice-free Arctic Ocean	Once per century	Once per decade	10 times more often
Coral reefs	Decline by 70-90 percent	Decline by more than 99 percent	Up to 2.9 times worse
Extreme heat waves	Experienced by 14 percent of global population at least once every 5 years	Experienced by more than 33 percent of global population at least once every 5 years	2.6 times worse
Vertebrates that lose at least half their range	4 percent	8 percent	2 times worse
Area of Arctic permafrost that will thaw	4.8 million km	6.6 million km	38 percent worse
Reduction in corn yields in tropics	3 percent	7 percent	2.3 times worse
Decline in marine fisheries	1.5 million tons	3 million tons	2 times worse

Source: See endnote 6.

Capping the temperature increase at even two degrees is economically ambitious, because it requires emissions to peak by 2020, then to be cut in half each decade thereafter. This is a tall order for societies that have been sluggish to date in addressing climate. Acting aggressively will be expensive, but not prohibitively so. A study by Lord Nicholas Stern has found that the cost of staying within a two-degree C temperature cap could be as much as two percent of global GDP—but that this is much less than the cost of not acting.⁷ Importantly, the longer the delay in acting, the more expensive the problem becomes.

A Range of Responses

Because many scientists are skeptical that emissions can be cut deeply and quickly, calls are now emerging to consider using geoengineering initiatives to limit temperature rise. Proposed strategies include schemes to pull carbon from the atmosphere or deflect solar rays. These might prompt unintended consequences that could be monumental for the planet. The question facing the human family now is whether we will commit to the hard work of emissions reductions or embark on a risky geoengineering option.

To achieve deep cuts in emissions, nations need to adopt low-carbon solutions. An example comes from the US state of California, which passed a law mandating that all of the state's electricity come from renewable sources by 2045.⁸ In addition, consumers have a role to play. About a third of food produced globally is wasted—in industrial countries, largely by consumers—meaning that the energy and greenhouse gases associated with that share of the world's food production is also wasted.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? How do my tradition's sacred texts and teachings talk about climate and weather, storms, floods and drought? What picture of climate emerges from these teachings? What picture emerges of the divine vis-à-vis these teachings? Of humans vis-à-vis these teachings?	Make the link between the wisdom of one's tradition and the modern challenge of climate change.
? Who should bear the financial burden for addressing climate change? What is the responsibility of nations that have been historically high emitters?	Recognize an important moral dimension of climate change and reflect on how one's tradition might address the challenge.

AIR POLLUTION

Air pollution is the poster child of environmental challenges, a problem dating back to at least 1285 when King Edward I of England banned the burning of coal to improve air quality.⁹ Air pollution remains a major global challenge today, despite decades' worth of efforts to address the problem. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that 90 percent of people worldwide breathe air containing high levels of pollutants, and that around seven million people worldwide die each year from polluted outdoor and indoor air.¹⁰

The problem varies by development level, with low- and middle-income countries suffering the most. In those regions, 97 percent of cities with a population of 100,000 or more do not meet WHO air quality guidelines. In wealthy countries, the share of cities outside the WHO guidelines is 49 percent.¹¹

Outdoor Air Pollution

Polluted air results largely from the burning of carbon-rich fuels, with virtually all sectors implicated, from industry and power plants to households, transportation, and even agriculture. In addition, sand and desert dust and waste burning also damage air quality. And local conditions such as geography and weather can affect pollution levels.¹²

Ambient (outdoor) air pollution accounts for an estimated 4.2 million deaths per year.¹³ Respiratory diseases and lung cancer are perhaps not surprising consequences, but air pollution can also bring on stroke and heart disease as well. The worst-hit regions are the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia.¹⁴

Beyond impacts on human health, air pollution leads to "acid rain" which acidifies soils and waterways, often harming wildlife. Nitrogen oxides, a byproduct of fossil fuel combustion in power plants and vehicles, can result in over-fertilization (eutrophication) of waterways. This stimulates algae growth at the expense of

other organisms, leading to oxygen-deficient “dead zones” in bodies of water. Pollution can also lower crop yields and slow forest growth, and of course the carbon in pollution contributes to climate change.

Indoor Air Pollution

Some three billion people in developing countries have little choice but to cook using open fires or stoves that burn wood, animal dung, or crop waste.¹⁵ With little ventilation indoors, families are exposed to levels of pollution, especially of soot, that are far beyond WHO recommended maximums. These families suffer elevated incidences of stroke, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and lung cancer, leading to more than 3.8 million premature deaths annually. Nearly half of deaths from pneumonia among children under five are caused by soot inhaled in their own homes.¹⁶

Some developing countries are taking steps to improve air quality. Cleaner transport and greater energy efficiency, together with better municipal waste management, are effective measures for reducing air pollution outdoors. And clean cookstoves are of great help in reducing indoor pollution.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
<p>❓ How do my tradition's scriptures and teaching speak about the air, wind, and breath? Does wind or breath have a divine nature? From this perspective, what does it mean if air is polluted or fouled?</p>	<p>Make the link between the wisdom of one's tradition and the modern challenge of air pollution.</p>
<p>❓ Some air pollution, such as emissions from cars, comes from industrial-level economic activity. Other pollution comes from burning wood, charcoal, or dung in the homes of poor people. How does my tradition help me to distinguish and assess these very different forms of air pollution? Would my tradition's teachings on air, wind, and breath apply to both forms of pollution?</p>	<p>Wrestle with the complex nature of this problem and identify the implications of that complexity for development in general. For example, what should society's response be when an economic advance that will build prosperity and create jobs is also shown to carry serious environmental or social liabilities?</p>

IMPORTANCE OF FORESTS

Forests play a critical role in regulating the Earth's climate and are crucial to the achievement of the SDGs. Forests, particularly in tropical countries, are important sources of income, food security and livelihoods and make massive but largely underappreciated contributions to agricultural production. They absorb, clean and recycle freshwater; support healthy soil and prevent flooding, and are the only safe, proven and natural way to capture and store carbon dioxide at large scale. They also contain more than 50 percent of the world's plant and animal species.

Tropical deforestation continues at alarming rates, deeply undermining global efforts to address climate change, stem biodiversity loss and achieve sustainable development. Data from the World Resources Institute shows a loss of tree cover equivalent to the area of France, Germany and the UK combined in the last decade alone. Every year an area of forest the size of Austria is decimated. That is a rate of 27 football fields a minute.

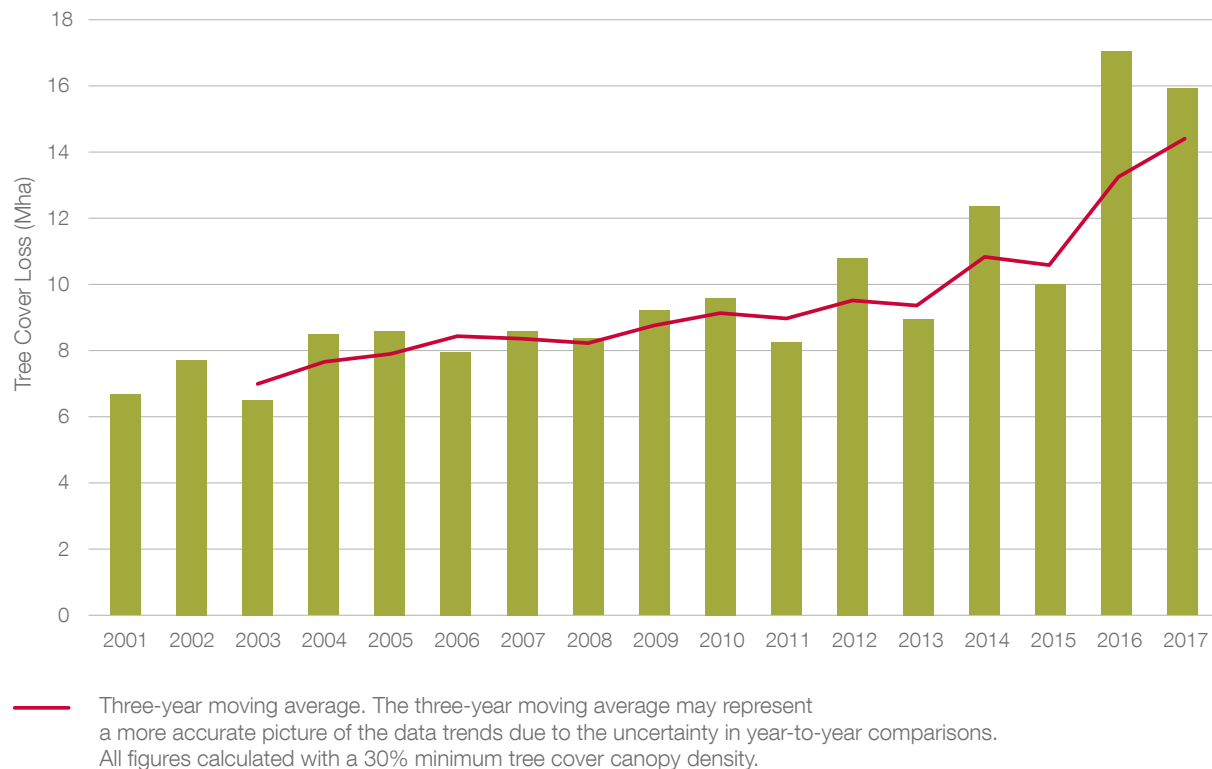


Figure 3. Tropical Tree Cover Loss, 2001-2017

Source: See endnote 17.

DRIVERS AND IMPACT

A large and increasing proportion of deforestation across tropical countries is driven by forest clearing – much of it illegal – to cultivate global commodities such as soy, beef, palm oil and pulp and paper. In Latin America, forests are cleared to grow soybeans and sugar cane, and to raise cattle, often for export. In Asia, forests are cleared to provide palm oil, coconut, rubber and teak, again for overseas markets. In Africa, forest clearing is primarily driven by small-scale farming and fuel wood collection and charcoal production for domestic use. Extractive industries, such as the mining and fossil fuel sectors, also play a damaging role.

Tropical deforestation has a number of social and economic impacts. Critically, tropical deforestation is a key source of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. When forests are cleared and trees are burned or decay, carbon is released into the atmosphere. Forest destruction not only generates carbon

emissions, it diminishes nature's capacity to absorb them. If tropical deforestation were a country, its annual contribution to the emissions that cause climate change would be greater than those of the entire European Union. Research suggests that the protection, restoration and sustainable management of forests could offer up to one third of the emission reductions needed to meet our climate goals. Lowering deforestation rates offers many developing countries the single-most attractive option for contributing to reduced global emissions in a way that is compatible with their own development objectives, and one that is particularly aligned with the interests of their poorest citizens.

Recent studies show that no more forests need to be cleared for agriculture. It is not a matter of claiming more land but making better use of what we already have, reducing food waste and shifting toward healthier diets. We can feed a population reaching nearly 10 billion by 2050 without further compromising the environment and forests. Tropical forests do not need to be a casualty of food production.

Tropical deforestation is also a human rights issue. For centuries, indigenous peoples and forest communities living in and near tropical forests have served as their stewards and managers. Research shows that while making up less than 5 percent of the global population, indigenous peoples manage more than 80 percent of global biodiversity, and when indigenous peoples' land rights are legally recognized and protected by governments, deforestation rates and carbon dioxide emissions are often significantly reduced. Yet research also suggests that indigenous people and forest communities lack legal rights to almost three quarters of their traditional lands. In many parts of the world, indigenous peoples face grave threats as they defend their forests from incursion by industries like mining, logging, oil and agribusiness.

Over the last 10 years, understanding of the science, economics and politics of reducing tropical deforestation as a win-win opportunity to address climate change, biodiversity loss and sustainable development have advanced dramatically. Major innovations in policy and technology have converged to demonstrate that slowing deforestation is both feasible and beneficial, and to show how international support can help. There is simply no way we can preserve biodiversity, the climate system, and our freshwater supplies without stopping tropical forest loss.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? What significance do trees or forests hold in my faith or spiritual tradition? How are trees and forests related to human well-being in my tradition's teachings?	Make the link between the wisdom of my tradition and the modern challenge of tropical deforestation, climate change and biodiversity loss.
? What could my congregation do on the issue of protecting rainforests and the rights of indigenous peoples in the areas of education, action and advocacy? What spiritual meaning might be associated with these activities?	Begin to imagine how forest protection and restoration might be advanced within my own congregation, and how this work might be integrated into our congregational life.

SOIL DEGRADATION

Soil health is declining on all continents in a largely invisible but highly consequential challenge to the creation of sustainable economies. Soil degradation affects a wide range of associated issues, from food supply to water availability to climate change.

Global-scale data on soil degradation is scarce because of the challenges of mapping greatly varying conditions across vast areas. But studies in the 1990s and 2000s suggested that some 15 to 24 percent of land globally is degraded, which means that it has suffered physical damage (e.g., erosion) or chemical damage (salinization) enough to reduce its productivity.¹⁸ In 2018 a new UN-backed study generally confirmed that finding, reporting that between 1998 and 2013, roughly 20 percent of the world's vegetated land surface exhibited ongoing declines in productivity. The lost productivity was found in 20 percent of cropland, 16 percent of forest land, 19 percent of grassland, and 27 percent of rangeland.¹⁹

The continuing loss and degradation of soils unfolds as the demand for food continues to increase. In 2018 the number of hungry people in the world rose for the third consecutive year after several years of decline; some 821 million people—one out of nine members of the human family—are chronically hungry today,²⁰ and demand for food is expected to increase by 50 percent between 2013 and 2050.²¹ At the same time, land suitable for farming, but not yet under cultivation, is increasingly scarce and limited largely to Latin America and Africa. And land is increasingly used for non-essential purposes: more than a third of all grain produced worldwide is fed to cattle for meat production, an inefficient use of this food.²² In addition, climate change will be disruptive to food production. These pressures on the food supply system make healthy soils more critical than ever.

Land degradation occurs as pressures on land for food and other goods and services continue to mount. In the past two decades, land harvested area has expanded by 16 percent, irrigated area has doubled, and agricultural output has nearly tripled.²³ But this impressive output has often been achieved using unsustainable practices. Soil tillage leads to erosion, and overuse of irrigation water can salinize soils, causing a loss of fertility, abandonment of land, and eventually, desertification. The head of external relations for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has likened industrial agriculture to an extractive industry similar to mining, because of its focus on short-term gain at the expense of long-term viability.²⁴

Care for land requires changes to land-use practices, especially in agriculture. Proponents of regenerative agriculture—an approach to farming that is built around advancing and maintaining soil health—advocate for soil-centered agricultural policies. Others point to the role consumers can play in conserving soils, by reducing demand for meat, which would reduce the need for high-yield feed production. Preserving forests and wetlands and avoiding their conversion to farmland would be helpful as well.

WATER SCARCITY

Earth is called the Blue Planet for its abundance of water, yet clean, fresh water is an increasingly scarce resource. More than 99 percent of the planet's water is saltwater or ice that is largely unavailable for human use—less than one percent is the fresh water in lakes, rivers, and aquifers on which humanity and much of nature depends.²⁵ In the face of this fixed supply, demand for water grows with expanding populations and

economies, and supply patterns are disrupted in many regions by a changing climate. All of these factors make fresh water a scarce resource in a growing number of world regions.

A 2018 report from the World Bank and the United Nations documented that 36 percent of the world's population lives in water-scarce regions, and that the share could grow to half of the world's people by 2050. It also estimates that some 700 million people could be displaced by water scarcity by 2030.²⁶ Some countries are particularly vulnerable. For example, in India, 54 percent of the total area of the country faces high to extremely high water stress, according to the World Resources Institute's India Water Tool.²⁷ At the global level, severe water scarcity—defined as water withdrawals greater than 40 percent of total renewable supply of surface water—extends broadly like a belt across the middle of the world. (See Figure 4.)²⁸

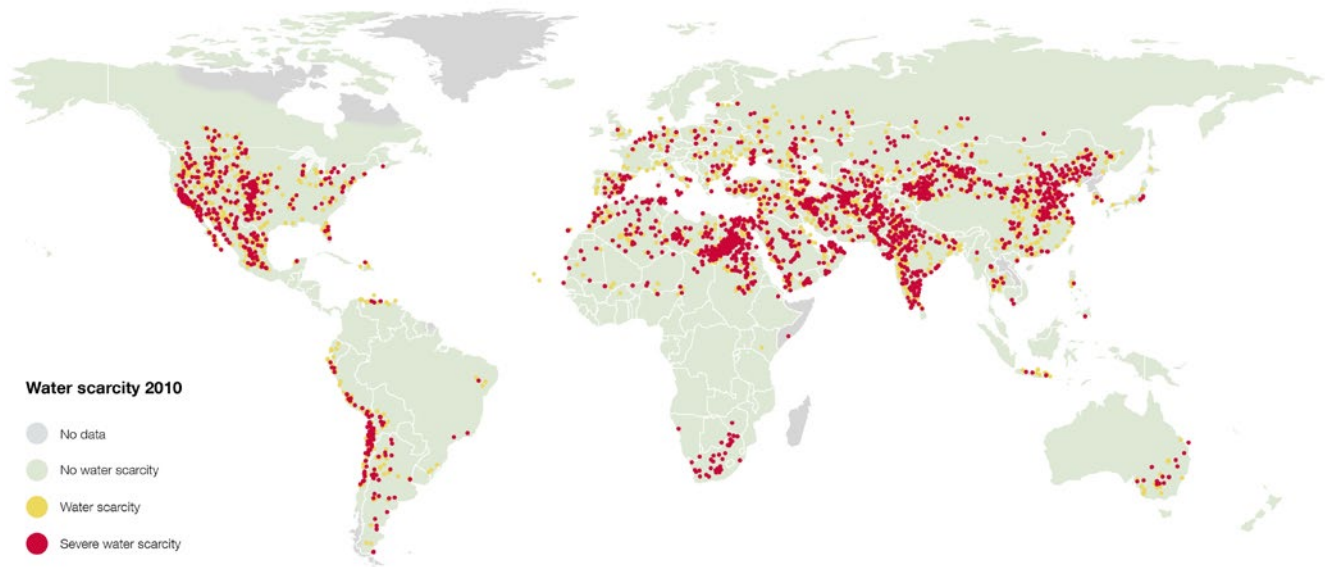


Figure 4. Physical Water Scarcity in 2010

Source: See endnote 29.

The issue is not abstract in some regions. In 2015, some Sao Paulo, Brazil residents went days without water as a combination of drought and poor water management led to severe shortages. And Cape Town, South Africa continues to warn that “Day Zero” may not be far off. The city’s piped water could be turned off because water levels in reservoirs are at critical levels.

A large share of the world’s people experiences water scarcity on at least a temporary basis. A 2016 study found that some two-thirds of the global population circa 2000, about four billion people, experienced severe water scarcity for one month or more per year.³⁰ The *2018 World Water Development Report* projected that by 2050, the population subject to such temporary shortages could number between 4.8 billion and 5.7 billion.³¹

Scarcity of groundwater (water from wells), which accounts for about 30 percent of all freshwater on Earth,³² represents a quiet crisis because its disappearance is entirely unseen. A 2012 study in the

journal *Nature* estimated that some 20 percent of the world's groundwater deposits, called aquifers, are pumped faster than they can be recharged by rainfall, meaning that their water levels are falling.³³ Over-pumping characterizes 54 percent of 4000 wells studied in India, for example; the World Bank estimates that within 20 years, 60 percent of that nation's wells could be in critical condition.³⁴

Some of the most-exploited aquifers in the world are in highly productive agricultural areas, such as the Central Valley and High Plains of the United States, the North China Plain in China, the Nile Delta of Egypt, and the Upper Ganges of India and Pakistan.³⁵ On the North China Plain, which produces about half of all of China's wheat, over-pumping means that wells are now dug more deeply, 120-200 meters compared with only 20-30 meters a decade ago. Pumping from such depths is energy intensive and can be expensive, costing as much as half of a farmer's annual income.³⁶

Impact of Scarcity

Water scarcity touches societies in fundamental ways. When clean water is in short supply, people must resort to poor-quality water, which sickens and even kills children and the elderly. The World Bank and United Nations estimate that more than two billion people worldwide drink contaminated water.³⁷

Scarcity can also affect agriculture, and therefore food production. Farming is the most water-intensive of all human activities, accounting for about two-thirds of water consumption at the global level. And irrigation—the controlled application of water to crops, as distinguished from the random watering of crops from rainfall—makes farming highly productive. Irrigated farmland accounts for only 16 percent of arable land in use today, but it delivers 44 percent of global crop production.³⁸ Thus, where water scarcity reduces the capacity to irrigate, the result is a disproportionate loss of food production.

Response to Scarcity

Extreme water scarcity does not necessarily translate to immediate suffering or economic consequences: Singapore and Israel have very low water availability per person. But avoiding human deprivation under such conditions requires water-centric policies and investments and leaves little room to absorb additional population growth. Indeed, as population expands in many water-tight countries, the number of people living under conditions of absolute water scarcity could reach 1.8 billion by 2025.³⁹

Some countries have turned to imports of water-intensive products to reduce their own need for water. Jordan, for example, imports “virtual” water in the form of products and their processing, that equals *five times* its own yearly renewable water resources. Other water-scarce countries that depend heavily on imports of virtual water are Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Algeria, Libya, Yemen and Mexico.⁴⁰ In practice, such a strategy often means importing food—because food is very water-intensive—leaving many countries dependent on world markets for a growing share of their food supply.

Individuals can contribute to conserving water, especially through their food choices. Meat consumption accounts for about one quarter of humanity's water footprint, largely because of the water needed to grow feedstuffs for cattle.⁴¹ Thus, shifting one's eating to less water-intensive forms of meat (for example, chicken rather than beef), or away from meat consumption altogether, can save large quantities of water, and could

be more healthful as well. Shifting to a vegetarian diet in an industrial country could reduce an individual's water consumption by 36 percent.⁴²

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? Water is a powerful symbol of cleanliness and purification in many traditions. Does water pollution carry any moral offense in my tradition?	Make the link between the wisdom of my tradition and the modern challenge of water scarcity, including scarcity created by water pollution.
? How does my tradition think about the overuse of water? What might my tradition offer to create a greater ethic of sacredness around water, so that water is viewed with respect, and not merely as a commodity?	Think about how my tradition's teaching might contribute to creation of a more sustainable culture in the community and society around me.

BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Possibly the most underappreciated threat from the palette of environmental challenges facing our planet today is the weakening of natural systems through biodiversity loss. Whether at the genetic, species, or ecosystem level, the complexity of life on Earth is diminishing—a particularly troubling development for those who regard nature as a gift from the divine. Because the diversity of living things is the product of millions of years of evolution, some have described the massive loss of biodiversity as “burning the library of life.”⁴³

Many biologists say we live in an era of mass extinction, the sixth in our planet's 4.6 billion-year history, and the first caused by humans.⁴⁴ Species are disappearing at many times the natural rate: the International Union for the Conservation of Nature reports that 25 percent of mammal species, 13 percent of bird species, and 41 percent of amphibian species are threatened with extinction.⁴⁵ The number of threatened mammals, birds, and amphibian species is up by double-digit percentages since 1996/1998.⁴⁶

Beyond global species extinctions, biologists document extensive population declines of many species and local disappearances. Nearly half of the 177 mammal species surveyed in a recent study were found to have lost more than 80 percent of their geographic range between 1900 and 2015.⁴⁷ An example is the lion, which was once found in most of Africa, southern Europe, the Middle East, and northwestern India, but are now confined to scattered areas of sub-Saharan Africa and a small part of India.⁴⁸ Authors of the study note that many local species losses “will have negative cascading consequences on ecosystem functioning and services vital to sustaining civilization.” They go on: “We describe this as a ‘biological annihilation’ to highlight the current magnitude of Earth's ongoing sixth major extinction event.”⁴⁹

Biodiversity loss also means loss of “ecosystem services,” the natural functions that are the foundation of all human activity, including economic activity. These services range from pollination of plants by bees,

capture of atmospheric carbon for storage in plants and the ocean, water filtration and purification in wetlands, and erosion prevention provided by plant roots.⁵⁰ These services, provided by nature at no charge, were estimated in 2014 to be worth \$125 trillion.⁵¹ It is also estimated that degradation and ecosystem losses erased trillions of dollars' worth of services between 1997 and 2011.⁵²

Loss of biodiversity is the result of a variety of human activities. As we introduce changes in land use (by cutting forests for agriculture or converting wildland to urban built-up area); overuse natural resources such as fisheries and forests; facilitate, usually unwittingly, the movements of invasive species; burn fossil fuels that change the climate; and continue to emit pollutants, we harm natural areas and species.⁵³ In these and other ways, human activities are dominating the planet. Indeed, by one estimate, human activities claim between 25 and 40 percent of the planet's net primary productivity (a measure of the biological output on our planet), which marginalizes other species in their efforts to survive. Figure 5 gives a sense of how species abundance declines in forests and grasslands as human intervention increases. Photos of undisturbed areas (at top) are the baseline, with full populations of species. The share of species populations declines as human activity increases.⁵⁴

Figure 5. Species Abundance and Human Activity

Source: See endnote 55.



Recreating a planet that nurtures a full range of life requires dedicated effort. Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2010 set up 20 goals known as the Aichi Biodiversity targets, a set of voluntary goals ranging from halting overfishing and controlling invasive species to reducing the rate of deforestation by half. A 2014 report, however, showed that only two of the 20 goals were on track to being met.⁵⁶ Ironically, one of the targets on track to be met—setting aside 17 percent of our planet’s land area in wildlife reserves—may be woefully insufficient. Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson argued in 2017 that fully half the planet’s area should be set aside for nature.⁵⁷

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
<p>❓ Biodiversity loss could be viewed as the destruction of Creation, or destruction of the interconnected web of life. Does my tradition view it in either of these ways?</p>	<p>Make the link between the wisdom of my tradition and the modern challenge of species extinctions and other biodiversity loss.</p>
<p>❓ Species extinctions have occurred five times before in the history of our planet, all naturally (not driven by human activities). Does my tradition help me to understand the current mass extinction as morally different from previous extinctions? If so, how?</p>	<p>Think about what difference is found in degradation caused by humans compared with degradation caused by other forces.</p>

OCEANS

The world’s oceans cover some three-quarters of the Earth’s surface and are vital to economies worldwide, even in landlocked nations. Oceans help to regulate climate, provide food, foster economic activity, and protect biodiversity, among other benefits.⁵⁸ Despite their importance, the world’s oceans are overexploited and degraded at levels not seen in 55 million years, when acidified ocean waters caused widespread marine extinctions—to the point that these trends threaten massive changes to human societies.⁵⁹

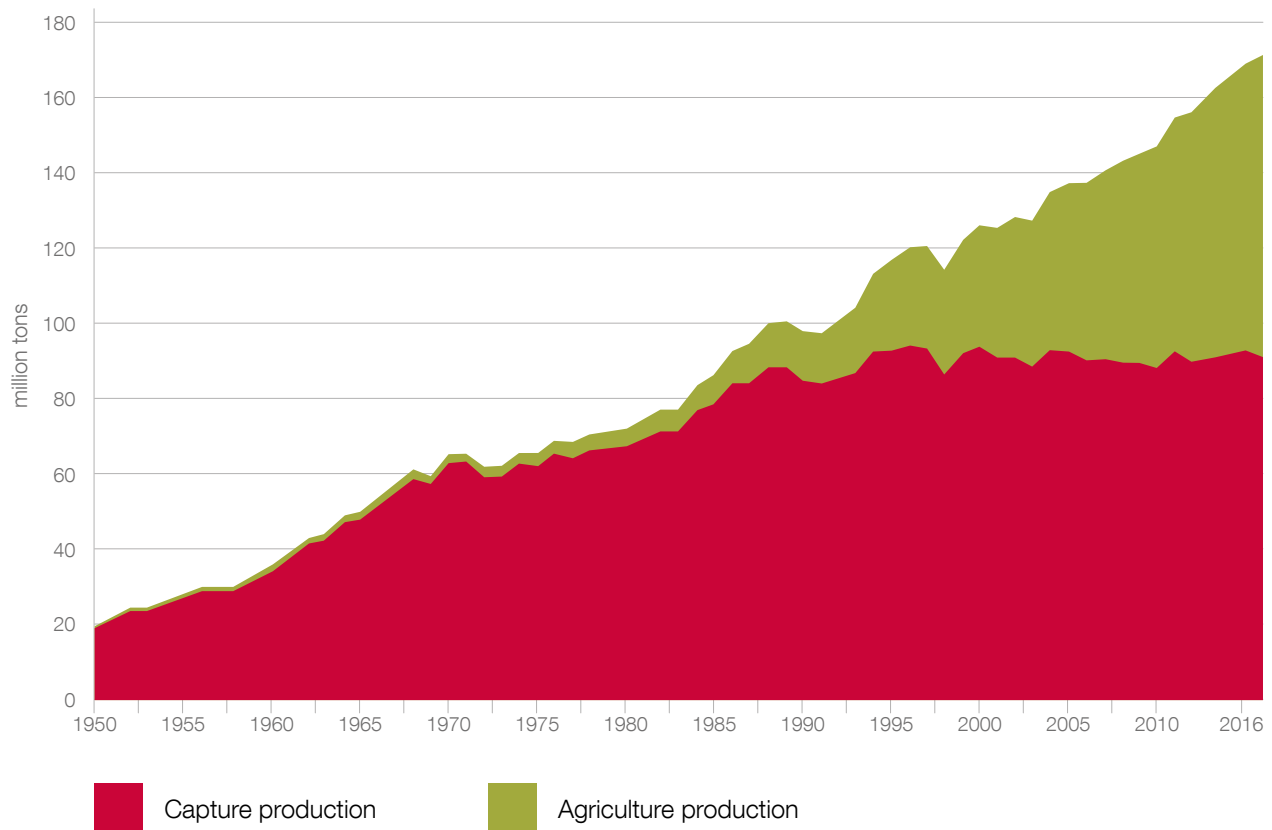
Global Fish Catch

Perhaps the most well-known indicator of the decline in ocean health is the decline of fisheries due to overfishing. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported in 2018 that 33 percent of marine fisheries are fished beyond sustainable levels, up from 10 percent in 1974. All told, 93 percent of marine fishery resources are fished at or beyond sustainable levels. Global marine fish catch has been flat since the mid-1990s as overfishing has become more common.

One response to marine overfishing has been the development of aquaculture, or fish farming. Today, nearly as many fish are farmed as caught, a major shift in sourcing that has allowed fish consumption to increase

faster than global population.⁶⁰ (See Figure 6.) But aquaculture carries costs. It replaces what had been a freely provided, wild fish with farmed fish that must be fed, raised, and protected from disease.

Figure 6. World Capture Fisheries and Aquaculture Production



Source: See endnote 61.

Oceanic Degradation

Oceans are credited with slowing the rate at which the planet is warming, because they take up carbon that would otherwise have remained in the atmosphere. But this blessing is likely to diminish as the world's oceans become saturated with carbon. Some scientists argue that the rate of oceanic carbon uptake is already slowing.⁶²

Meanwhile, the oceans' carbon absorption service is making oceans sicker, because the extra carbon makes their water more acidic. Today the seven seas are 30 percent more acidic than before the Industrial Revolution.⁶³ Acidification weakens the shells of organisms such as corals, oysters, clams, mussels, and snails,⁶⁴ and requires them to spend more energy building and maintaining their shells. This leaves less energy for their own growth and reproduction.

Acidification also helps drive the decline of coral reefs, among the most species-rich ecosystems on the planet. Of the 29 World Heritage sites designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 25 experienced bleaching (damage from coral caused by warming waters) between 2014 and 2017.⁶⁵ In the same period, Australia's Great Barrier Reef endured the longest and most destructive mass bleaching event,⁶⁶ which killed 29 percent of its shallow-water corals.⁶⁷

Coral reefs support some 25 percent of all marine fish species,⁶⁸ because they act as centers of spawning, refuge, and feeding for a wide range of species. This in turn makes them rich fishing areas that support coastal communities, often in poor countries. Reefs also protect coastlines from storm surges and violent wave action and are a growing source of ingredients for new medicines. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) estimates the value of reefs to be in the billions of dollars.⁶⁹

A separate source of serious marine pollution is nutrient runoff. As fertilizers wash from farms into streams and rivers, then reach the open sea, they create oxygen-deprived "dead zones" devoid of marine life. Such zones can be sizable: the dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico, formed by farm runoff that enters the Mississippi River and flows to the sea, was more than 15,000 square kilometers in 2013, about the size of Connecticut. With the intensification of agriculture since the 1960s and the use of greater quantities of fertilizer, the number and extent of dead zones worldwide has spread dramatically. The United Nations Development Programme identifies more than 500 dead zones worldwide, affecting a total area about the size of the United Kingdom.⁷⁰

Guiding Questions for Oceans

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
<p>? What role do the sea, fish, and ships play in the teachings and sacred writings of your tradition?</p>	<p>Make the link between the wisdom of my tradition and the modern challenge of oceanic degradation and overuse.</p>
<p>? How does your tradition help you to grapple with the astounding notion that vast areas of ocean have been fished out, or rendered "dead zones" through human activity? What does this say about the power of humans vis-à-vis nature, and what view or guidance does your tradition offer on how to wield that power?</p>	<p>Provide another opportunity to think about this unique moment in human history, when human powers are at unprecedented levels, and what this means from a faith or spiritual perspective.</p>

Guiding Questions for Sectoral Issues Overall

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
<p>❓ How does my tradition value our planet's resources beyond their worth as commodities? In what ways does my tradition encourage viewing air, water, trees, and soil as sacred gifts or divine possessions, and how does this inform my use of them?</p>	<p>Develop a perspective on resources as gifts, not just commodities, and ponder how this shift in perspective might affect our use of resources.</p>
<p>❓ Does my tradition appreciate “nature’s services”—pollination of crops by bees, purification of the air by trees, flood control by plant roots, and many others—as well as the goods our planet provides?</p>	<p>Develop a consciousness of nature as offering not just resources, but a wide range of services, all of which are critical for sustainable human civilization.</p>
<p>❓ How would my tradition answer this question: To what extent should the great resources of the Earth—the air, sea, and land—be regarded as belonging to everyone?</p>	<p>Consider the extent to which resources such as the atmosphere or the oceans should belong to all, rather than be privately owned. Also, how far down the resource list should an ethic of “resources as commons” extend?</p>
<p>❓ Does my tradition promote a rootedness and appreciation of the places in which we are rooted? If so, does this rootedness help to cultivate an ethic of conservation?</p>	<p>Develop an awareness that a strong sense of rootedness may help create a love of place and a desire to protect it. Examine if and how one’s tradition helps to promote a sense of place.</p>

II. Religious Assets to Protect the Earth

A strategist interested in designing a global infrastructure for change would do well to study the world's faith and spiritual traditions. Consider their toolbox for societal transformation: numerous adherents who meet regularly and form deep relational ties; physical assets, including land and buildings; meaningful amounts of investment capital; and most powerfully, moral teaching and spiritual tools such as prayer, song, and liturgical practices. At a conceptual level at least, the world's faith and spiritual traditions sit atop an impressive infrastructure for societal transformation.

Of course, religious and spiritual traditions exist for reasons deeper than creating societal change, and it is cynical to view these traditions merely as instruments of change. (The cynical perspective also betrays poor understanding of the nature of religious and spiritual power, which paradoxically often calls for humility, and detachment from outcomes.) Indeed, an instrumentalist posture can alienate people of belief. As one national representative of a Christian denomination in Washington, DC remarked, "We are not interested in becoming the latest rented constituency for the global environmental movement."

That said, the global sustainability crisis will affect the entire planet and all societies, and people of faith can choose a greater or lesser role in addressing it. Arguably, the interests of people of belief and advocates of sustainability align closely on a range of issues. For this reason, believers in many traditions are exploring how a commitment to sustainable policies, practices, and lifestyles might fit comfortably within their tradition.

MORAL ASSETS

People of faith and spirituality often possess a moral energy that compels engagement on a wide range of public issues. In the past two centuries alone, religions have been involved in the abolitionist movement in the UK and US, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa and the civil rights movement in the US, and in many nations, the anti-nuclear, debt-relief, and immigration-rights movements. The moral power of religious voices is a powerful addition to debate on these important matters. Today people of belief can use their moral standing to address sustainability issues, by deepening the scientific basis for sustainability with powerful stirrings that act beyond the cognitive and rational realm.

Consider, for example, the role that Daoists have played in turning Chinese medicine away from the use of ingredients taken from endangered species such as rhinos and tigers. Chinese civil law was ineffective in stopping the use of rhino horn and tiger bones in medicine, but Daoist authorities, operating within the Daoist worldview of practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine, were more persuasive. Drawing on their faith's belief in the oneness of the universe, Daoist teachers concluded that it is not possible to heal one species by destroying another. And they offered alternatives, drawing from their ancient medical scriptures, which did not involve endangered species.⁷¹

Similarly, religious deliberation in Tanzania persuaded Muslims to end their use of dynamite in fishing, which had increased their productivity but at great environmental cost. As with the Chinese healers, government efforts at educating the fishers were not effective. Nor were laws prohibiting the practice. But local sheikhs became involved and examined the practice in the light of Quranic teaching. Verses such as "...eat and drink:

but waste not by excess for Allah loveth not the wasters” (7:31) were powerful in suggesting that dynamite fishing ran counter to the will of Allah. The sheikhs abandoned the practice and helped fishers to learn sustainable fishing practices. Martin Palmer and Victoria Finlay report that the religious approach succeeded because “it made sense within people’s culture and worldview.”⁷²

A more difficult task may be for spiritual and faith traditions to challenge the consumerist ethic that drives so many modern economies. American historian Gary Cross asserts that the 20th century was not won by capitalism or socialism, but by consumerism, so definitively has the drive to acquire and consume reorganized the lives of billions, peacefully and without coercion. The materialist ethic that saturates modern economies is a tough nut to crack.

Yet the world’s faith and spiritual traditions are well-equipped to do so. Most traditions have warned, often for thousands of years, of the danger of excessive attachment to the material world. (See Box 2.) And environmental writer Bill McKibben once wrote that “among the institutions of our society, only the communities of faith can still posit some reason for human existence beyond the constant accumulation of stuff.” Programs such as GreenFaith’s Living the Change initiative offer excellent tools for living more thoughtfully vis-à-vis the environment and the concept of fairness. Yet persuading adherents to moderate consumption is a huge challenge for people of faith and spirituality in the decades ahead.

SOCIAL ASSETS

People of belief also possess a strong set of assets—the land, buildings, investment capital, and other resources held by members or their institutions. These tools are increasingly used in innovative ways to build sustainable communities and societies.

Consider the Catholic Energies program to bring clean energy and energy efficiency to a wide variety of Catholic-owned buildings in the US, from parishes and schools to hospitals and retreat centers. The program brings together specialists in energy technologies, financiers, and managers or owners of Catholic properties to create facility upgrades—from new lighting and heating systems to renewable energy sources

Box 2. Selected Religious Perspectives on Consumption

BAHÁ’I FAITH

” In all matters moderation is desirable. If a thing is carried to excess, it will prove a source of evil.” (Baha’u’llah, Tablets of Baha’u’llah)

BUDDHISM

” Whoever in this world overcomes his selfish cravings, his sorrows fall away from him, like drops of water from a lotus flower.” (Dhammapada, 336)

CHRISTIANITY

” No one can be the slave of two masters...You cannot be the slave both of God and money.” (Matthew, 6:24)

CONFUCIANISM

” Excess and deficiency are equally at fault.” (Confucius, XI.15)

DAOISM

” He who knows he has enough is rich.” (Dao De Jing)

HINDUISM

” That person who lives completely free from desires, without longing...attains peace.” (Bhagavad-Gita, II.71)

ISLAM

” Eat and drink, but waste not by excess: He loves not the excessive.” (Q’uran, 7.31)

JUDAISM

” Give me neither poverty nor riches.” (Proverbs, 30:28)

such as solar energy—quickly and affordably. The Catholic institution pays a single monthly subscription fee that is affordable because of the savings in energy costs. And the institutions avoid the need to raise capital for the project.⁷³

Or consider the case of land ownership by the Maronite Church in Lebanon. When the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) sought in 1990 to preserve the forest of Harissa on the coast of Lebanon, they wrote to the landowner, the Maronite Church, which had held the forest for 1000 years. UNEP stated the scientific and legal arguments for conserving the forest, but did not mention the forest's longstanding spiritual significance for the Church. The Church did not respond. But when the Alliance for Religions and Conservation approached Church authorities about making a sacred gift of the forest—essentially pledging to preserve it—the Patriarch quickly agreed. The faith-centered approach is credited with achieving the conservation outcome.

Communities of faith and spirituality are flexibly established for local, national, and global impact. Local congregations of a few hundred or a few thousand persons can undertake low-risk, small-investment experiments that allow them to test new ideas, without the need to pass legislation or raise huge sums of capital. For example, a number of congregations have established their own credit unions, an important asset for low-income members seeking to avoid payday lenders. And many congregational experiments, especially visible ones such as vegetable gardens and solar panels, essentially become demonstration projects for their larger communities.

At the same time, many congregations are linked with others in networks that may be local, national, or even global in extent, allowing congregations to multiply their social influence, achieve operational efficiencies, and move the needle on sustainability issues.

SPIRITUAL ASSETS

Many would argue that the greatest assets of many faith traditions are their most intangible ones: the prayers, songs and liturgies that mediate our relationship to the divine. These spiritual assets may seem removed from mundane concerns such as recycling and solar energy, but they can be the spark that keeps environmental commitment alive, and the tool that makes our actions sacred.

Cultural ecologist E.N. Anderson notes that environmentally oriented ritual helps people to forge emotional connections with nature, creating a strong motivation to value and protect it. By contrast, ties to nature in industrial societies tend to be weak because specialized roles allow us to live without learning to grow our own food, fetch our own water, or cut our own fuelwood. Thus, people in industrial countries often cannot describe where our water comes from, how far the lettuce on our tables has traveled, or where our garbage and sewage winds up.

Some traditions employ spiritual assets to bring healing to the environment around them. In Thailand, Buddhist monks are known to ordain trees, giving a sacred character to what is often viewed as merely an economic asset. They choose the largest tree in the grove, wrap a saffron robe around it, and undertake an ordination ceremony. The symbolic act communicates to the entire village that the forest conservation effort is not merely a civic activity, but is imbued with sacred meaning, thereby protecting the tree and the grove in which it stands.

The power of spiritual assets is sometimes breathtaking. The story is told of the Allied and German soldiers in World War I who stopped their fighting on Christmas Eve when one side started to sing “Silent Night,” a Christmas favorite whose melody was familiar on both sides. Soon soldiers who had targeted one another for death found themselves sharing chocolate and cigarettes in the “no man’s land” between the enemy trenches. That a religious song could essentially bring war to a halt, however briefly, suggests the power of spiritual assets to speak to the heart and to change behavior.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? How might my tradition be called to use land, buildings, purchasing power, or influence in the effort to build sustainable communities? Should sustainability values such as energy efficiency and minimizing the use of plastics be standard practices in my faith or spiritual tradition?	Begin to think creatively about physical assets and how they and their use might be steered in a more sustainable direction.
? To what extent should our community’s financial assets, and the financial assets of individuals in the community, be managed using sustainability criteria?	Begin to think creatively about financial assets and how they might be used to promote greater sustainability.
? Does my tradition help members to see ourselves as inhabitants of a bioregion as much as we are citizens of a political jurisdiction?	Begin to think creatively about community location, and how consciousness of this might steer a congregation in a more sustainable direction.
? Should ownership of property carry obligations to the environment and to the community? If so, does my tradition reflect this in its ownership and management of land and buildings?	Begin to think creatively about ownership and its obligations.
? Should laws protect only the rights of humans, or does nature have rights as well—for example, the right of a species not to be driven to extinction?	Begin to think critically about non-human life and whether one’s tradition sees any room for rights for other forms of life.
? Should strengthening local economies be a priority?	Think about the environmental and social impact and advantages of local production and consumption.

III. Multi-Religious Action on Local, National, Regional and Global Levels

Many faith and spiritual traditions are composed of a network of communities that can be mobilized for great impact. These networks are best organized to operate efficiently, in two ways. First, they can act in concert with communities of other traditions, eliminating duplicated effort. Multi-religious cooperation softens discord among faith or spiritual traditions by deepening mutual understanding and aligning communities around common challenges. Cooperation also highlights complementary strengths, allowing each tradition to leverage assets for the greatest overall impact. And it facilitates public partnerships as traditions band together to work with non-religious actors.

A second type of efficiency occurs when communities of belief coordinate their own local, national, regional, and global units to operate effectively. This does not necessarily mean a strictly hierarchical approach to work. Instead, actions loop around and through each of the levels in ways that are reciprocal and reinforcing. In this way, the various levels learn from one another and avoid duplication of effort.

LOCAL

The local level—the municipality, neighborhood, and congregation—is where communities of belief engage life concretely. Here sustainability is made visible through environmental initiatives, sustainable lifestyles, and advocacy.

Environmental initiatives—Many communities of faith turn to teachings and ritual to inspire and guide their environmental work. In Mongolia, for example, communities have used sacred Buddhist texts to help deal with environmental challenges ranging from overgrazing and water scarcity to pollution and waste disposal. Buddhist leaders have recovered lost sacred texts that explain the sacred nature of each of hundreds of Mongolia's holy mountains and valleys, as well as how each should be honored. Many of these sites are important for biodiversity and for maintaining groundwater levels. The Buddhist community has begun to erect stone markers at several of these sites explaining how the trees, animals, and land should be protected.⁷⁴

Lifestyles—Communities of belief can influence how lifestyle decisions are made, from what to eat to the length of a shower. This is because the personal relationships formed in local communities generate *trust*. When believers know and trust one another, they can offer each other the trust and accountability needed to support difficult decisions. A sustainability ethos may seem restraining and joyless: limit your meat consumption, use your car less, cut back on purchases. Fellow believers can remind one another that such questions can be framed joyfully: simple living means less to manage, less stress, more to share, and most of all, greater freedom to respond to a spiritual call. The concept of fasting, which is practiced in many traditions, can add a spiritual dimension when used to guide environmental efforts. Thus some Christians find the practice of a Lenten fast to be a helpful way to approach reducing carbon or meat consumption.

Advocacy—Communities of belief can also engage members to act politically. The energy for letter-writing, marches, boycotts and the like are often found at the local level, where friends are known and influence

one another. Many congregations will call on members to support campaigns in favor of any number of sustainability issues, if they fit within a congregation's spiritual worldview, or if they deal with issues affecting their congregants.

NATIONAL

The most consequential frameworks for environmental action are built at the national level, where national faith organizations are found, and where political policy is made.

Many communities of belief are represented at the national level by federations, associations, councils and other organs that leverage a tradition's teaching across a nation. A good example of this is the 2018 Daoist community's call for local Daoist associations and temples to respond to "the call to build ecological civilization." Building on work since 2009 to undertake ecological education, build sustainable temples, promote healthy lifestyles, practice careful resource management and encourage green pilgrimage and tourism, the Daoist Ecological Temple Network (DETN) called for using temples as demonstration sites for sustainable building. In Daoist medicine, DETN encourages using herbs to the greatest extent possible rather than animal parts such as rhino horns, which endanger some species. The network's membership covers 200 temples across 28 provinces. DETN sees great alignment between ecological principles and Daoist teaching, including "the harmony between heaven, earth, and humanity"...and..."shared prosperity of all beings."⁷⁵

Or consider the "US Catholic Climate Declaration" issued in response to the notice by the US administration of its intent to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. Some 600 Catholic institutions of all types—schools, religious orders, dioceses, colleges, parishes, healthcare institutions, social welfare units, and others—called on the US government to remain "a global leader in reducing emissions" and to "return to the Paris Agreement." The document allowed Catholics, who make up approximately 25 percent of the US population, to speak out on an important issue with a unified voice.⁷⁶

REGIONAL

Opportunities for engagement sometimes emerge at the subnational level, or between the national and global levels when groups of nations or organizations coordinate efforts. The climate partnerships of groups of US states, for example, and the deliberations of mayors in the C40 groups of cities are examples of potential venues for impact. Consider, for example, the statement issued by the Interfaith Summit on Climate Change in support of small-island and low-income states in their struggle to manage the effects of climate change.⁷⁷ It used language rarely heard in political statements that appeal beyond the level of cognition, with assertions such as "we commit to stimulating consciences," and "We pray for you and for all humanity in caring for the earth." Such statements, offered across regions and denominations, invariably communicate in a broad and deep way.

Importantly, global-level entities such as UNEP are now looking to subnational groups to contribute solutions to intractable problems, given the lack of leadership sometimes found at the national level.⁷⁸ This could be read as a call for nongovernmental organizations, including those that represent faith and spiritual traditions, to become involved in these issues.

GLOBAL

The global dimension is valued for its agenda-setting power, as evidenced, for example, by the embrace of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals or the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate. At fora that attract the attention of global media, faith, spiritual, and religious traditions can weigh in to express their views on particular issues. Consider, for example, the multi-faith action taken at the United Nations climate conference (COP 23) in Bonn in 2017. There, Buddhist, Catholic, Evangelical, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Protestant, and Unitarian faith leaders released an Interfaith Climate Statement on Sustainable Lifestyles. The statement called on the world's spiritual, faith, and religious traditions to achieve the ambitious 1.5-degree cap emerging from the 2015 Paris Agreement by "dramatically reducing emissions from home energy use, adopting a plant-based diet and reducing food waste, and minimizing automobile and air travel."⁷⁹ The statement added an important moral voice to the climate discussion, and in its focus on lifestyle choices, addressed an area that gains little traction in sustainability discussions. It is also an area in which faith groups have a particular standing, because of their long history of teaching on materialism.

Faith traditions can also act independently at the global level to appeal to their membership and to the entire world. A clear example is Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, a major teaching document of the Catholic Church and the first ever produced on the environment. Issued six months before the December 2015 COP 21 climate conference in Paris, *Laudato Si'* was designed to weigh in on that important meeting, and to awaken Catholics and the world community to the urgency of the climate issue.

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? What are some of the institutions of my tradition at the local, national, regional, and global levels?	Map out the institutional and geographic structure of my tradition.
? How does information flow among the various levels of my tradition? Is this flow as efficient as it could be?	Become aware of communications patterns across my tradition and identify bottlenecks as well as effective flows.
? Is my tradition active in inter-religious and interdenominational networks that can keep us apprised of opportunities for information-sharing and collaboration?	Become aware of connections to other traditions that may be helpful in advancing sustainability efforts.

IV. Multi-Stakeholder Partnership

Examples of successful religious partnerships such as the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, the US civil rights movement and the Jubilee 2000 debt-reduction movement demonstrate the importance of coalitions in driving social change. In each case, people of belief worked closely with other societal actors to advance a cause, bringing change more quickly and efficiently than if they had acted in isolation. Engaging with a diverse set of partners increases effectiveness, broadens one's perspective, and strengthens the web of enduring civic relationships. This is especially important for the sustainability movement, which requires quick and massive action to create economies that are low in carbon, low in waste, and low in use of virgin materials.

For the modern environmental sustainability movement, several potential partners for faith and spirituality communities are easy to identify. Local- and national-level environmental, conservation, animal advocacy, and sustainability groups often welcome collaboration with people of belief. Communities of believers can offer the full set of assets identified earlier, and may also be appreciated for their commitment and credibility. For their part, sustainability and environmental groups offer an entrée to engaging these issues through myriad programs, from letter-writing campaigns to cleanup events at local rivers and parks.

LEVERAGING ASSETS

Beyond the easily named partners, potential alliances can be identified from a creative review of the assets that people of belief bring to the sustainability challenge. For example, beyond greening their own campuses, purchases and investments, congregations and faith and spiritual institutions could leverage their resources by collaborating with similarly placed sister institutions to become a force for systemic change. This could take many different forms for particular congregations. These ideas might spark possibilities for your congregation:

Buildings—As building owners interested in sustainability, faith communities could help to change the rules in the building sector. Imagine faith communities working with trade groups of architects, engineers, builders, and city planners to create or update codes of ethics to incorporate sustainability as a guiding precept in their work. Changes to building codes to require efficiency minimums in a city's buildings, creation of sustainability norms in engineering ethics, and commitment to using recycled and recyclable materials among builders could quickly lighten the footprint of the building sector, which uses roughly 40 percent of energy in many cities.

Or perhaps an advocacy partnership could be formed with labor unions to promote massive retrofitting of buildings for energy efficiency, likely a large source of employment. Perhaps workers displaced by the shift out of fossil fuels could be prioritized for these new jobs?

Land—Congregations sometimes own meaningful swaths of land, especially at larger facilities such as retreat centers. Could they collaborate with other institutional land owners to lobby government entities to create strong incentives for conservation easements, so that land is allowed to remain largely undeveloped? And where congregational land is smaller and urban but with patches of greenery, could congregations band

together to explore with local authorities and conservation organizations how patches citywide could become nodes in healthy biodiversity corridors that support wildlife?

Purchasers—Congregations can purchase green supplies, but their impact might be greater if they could work with other congregations or nonprofits to bolster the markets for green products. This could be done by joining or creating purchasing co-ops for commonly used goods and services. Would this be a natural function for congregations?

Investments—Individual investors in congregations can find socially responsible investment options, but far greater impact can be realized at the corporate level. Federations or networks of religious organizations can commit at the national or global level to invest in holdings that advance the public good and do not advance interests that harm the environment or the poor. Beyond this, individual members might organize themselves in investment circles for the same purpose.

Teachings—The values espoused by faith and spiritual traditions are potential springboards for partnership. Simple living values could be deepened among congregants through partnership with local or national environmental or simple living advocacy groups. Nature appreciation could be similarly advanced via partnerships with conservation and environmentally focused NGOs.

LEVERAGING MISSION

Sustainability involves redesigning economies to be low-carbon, low-waste, and with low levels of virgin materials use. It also requires a dignified life for people, through adequate employment, health, and education for all. In many economies, the greatest leverage points for sustainability action—where congregational commitments can yield the greatest reductions in energy use, waste generation, and material use—are in buildings, food, and transport. (Industry, forests, and energy sectors could yield even greater sustainability gains for some congregations/institutions, depending on location and interest.)

Fortunately, existing congregational outreach work overlaps with sustainability concerns. Identifying these intersections is an opportunity to think strategically about potential partnerships to lighten footprints. How might a sustainability dimension to traditional outreach programs—soup kitchens, health clinics, homelessness services, and overseas assistance—suggest new partnership possibilities? Matrix 1 is a tool to help generate such possibilities. It offers ideas for partnerships to stimulate thinking, along with blank spaces for your own ideas.

Matrix 1. Partnership Idea Generator: Matching Congregational Outreach and Sustainability Interests

Key:

- L Local-level partnership possibilities
- H Higher-jurisdiction partnership possibilities
- A Advocacy partnership possibilities

	BUILDINGS	FOOD	TRANSPORT
SOUP KITCHENS	<p>L Work with certification programs to ensure that materials are sustainably procured.</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L Partner with pro-organics NGOs and congregations to bolster urban food security by establishing city-wide networks of vegetable gardens. Or partner with sustainable agriculture organizations or organic farms to glean or otherwise procure organic produce.</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A Partner with advocates of food waste reduction to create infrastructure for collecting discarded foods from supermarkets for composting or (where safe), for use at soup kitchens.</p>	<p>L Partner with transport-focused NGOs to create and use a fleet of cargo bicycles to deliver vegetables from congregational gardens to soup kitchens, and to model one form of sustainable transport.</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>
HOMELESS SERVICES	<p>L Partner with employment and social service agencies to involve homeless populations in building their own shelters (perhaps "tiny houses") whose size and design results in low environmental impact.</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>
OVERSEAS ASSISTANCE	<p>L :</p> <p>H Partner with disaster relief agencies for rapid congregational assistance to the victims of storm disasters.</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H Partner with development assistance agencies to create programs linking reductions in meat consumption, and the associated monetary savings, with increased development assistance to low-income people.</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>
HEALTH CLINICS	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A :</p>	<p>L :</p> <p>H :</p> <p>A Partner with health advocacy organizations for creation of a fleet of carbon-free ambulances, preferably available at no cost to low-income patients.</p>
EDUCATION	<p>L :</p> <p>H Work with national-level environmental and sustainability organizations to create educational modules on sustainability for incorporation into religious education programs.</p> <p>A :</p>		

EVALUATING POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS

Creating effective partnerships requires recognition of the unique strengths and expertise of other agencies. *Religions for Peace* suggests using the following questions to evaluate a potential partnership:⁸⁰

- What is the mission of the agency or organization? Does it align with the mission of our own congregation or institution?
- Has the organization worked collaboratively with other organizations in the past? If so, how might collaboration with religious groups be different?
- Does the organization have resources to contribute to shared projects?
- How might our own congregation or institution benefit from this partnership?
- What are the possible challenges that can be anticipated?

Guiding Questions

QUESTION	OBJECTIVE
? What is missing from my community's skill set? What other communities have those skills? Would they be logical partners for us?	Inventory the assets that are needed but unavailable within my tradition for advancing sustainability work. Identify potential partners who possess these assets.
? Which assets from my tradition offer mutually beneficial partnership possibilities to accelerate the achievement of sustainability outcomes?	Inventory assets of one's tradition that are complementary to those of other traditions and that might serve as ground for collaboration.
? What are the most important outreach efforts in my tradition, and how do they intersect with sustainability concerns? What partnership possibilities are inspired by considering these interests?	Identify the outreach priorities of one's tradition and evaluate each for sustainability features.

Conclusion

This moment in human history is clearly one of threat to our planet and to the human family. Yet it also represents a tremendous opportunity. Societies worldwide can learn to re-appreciate their relationship to the natural world, create a more equal economy, and rethink our understanding of progress. Indeed, we are positioned to undertake the most ambitious redesign of civilization ever envisioned. This work requires knowledge, skill, and committed action, to be sure, but it also requires *inspiration*—the divine spark that can guide the design and building of just and sustainable societies and economies. Thus, people of belief are critical in this transformation. The many gifts possessed by the world's spiritual, faith, and religious traditions are essential complements to secular efforts to create sustainable models of progress. Our contributions are needed, urgently.

As people of belief undertake this challenge, we would do well to lead with the optimism and hope that characterize us. We are indeed fortunate to be part of this blessed moment in human history.

Endnotes

- 1 Global Footprint Network, *Earth Overshoot Day*, <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/earth-overshoot-day/>, (16 November 2018).
- 2 <https://www.footprintnetwork.org>
- 3 Global Footprint Network, *NFA Public Data Package v3*, www.footprintnetwork.org (16 November 2018).
- 4 <https://www.footprintnetwork.org> .
- 5 Coral Davenport, "Major Climate Report Describes a Strong Risk of Crisis as Early as 2040," *New York Times*, October 7, 2018.
- 6 Kelly Levin, *Half a Degree and a World Apart: The Difference in Climate Impacts Between 1.5°C and 2°C of Warming*, World Resources Institute, <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/half-degree-and-world-apart-difference-climate-impacts-between-15-c-and-2-c-warming>, (24 October, 2018).
- 7 Nicholas Stern, "Economic development, climate and values: making policy," *Proceedings of Biological Science*, August 7, 2015.
- 8 The Editorial Board, "In California, Facts and Science Still Matter," *The New York Times*, 3 September, 2018.
- 9 Peter Brimblecombe, "Attitudes and Responses Toward Air Pollution in Medieval England," *Journal of the Air Pollution Control Association*, 26:10, 941-945.
- 10 World Health Organization, "9 out of 10 people worldwide breathe polluted air, but more countries are taking action," WHO press release, <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/02-05-2018-9-out-of-10-people-worldwide-breathe-polluted-air-but-more-countries-are-taking-action>, (2 May, 2018).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 World Health Organization, "Household air pollution and health," <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health>, (8 May, 2018).
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 L.R. Oldeman, et al., *World Map Of The Status Of Human-Induced Soil Degradation: An Explanatory Note*, Global Assessment of Soil Degradation (GLASOD), International Soil Reference and Information Centre, http://www.isric.org/sites/default/files/ExplanNote_1.pdf, and Z. G. Bai, "Proxy global assessment of land degradation," *Soil Use and Management*, http://www.geo.uzh.ch/microsite/rsi-documents/research/publications/peer-reviewed-articles/2008_ProxyGlobal_SoilUseMgmt_ZB-0471031552/2008_ProxyGlobal_SoilUseMgmt_ZB.pdf, September, 2008, 24, 223-234.
- 19 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, *The Global Land Outlook*, first edition, Executive Summary, (Bonn, Germany: UNCCD, 2017).
- 20 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018, Building climate resilience for food security and nutrition*, (Rome: FAO, 2018).
- 21 FAO, *The future of food and agriculture – Trends and challenges*, (Rome: FAO, 2017).
- 22 Author's calculations based on data at United States Department of Agriculture, Production, Supply and Distribution database.
- 23 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, 2017.
- 24 Jonathan Watts, "Third of Earth's soil is acutely degraded due to agriculture," *The Guardian*, 12 September, 2017.
- 25 United States Geological Survey, *The World's Water*, <http://water.usgs.gov/edu/earthwherewater.html>, (2 December, 2016).
- 26 High-Level Panel on Water Outcome Document, *Making Every Drop Count: An Agenda for Water Action*, (Washington, DC: 2018).
- 27 World Resources Institute, India Water Tool, <https://www.wri.org/blog/2015/02/3-maps-explain-india-s-growing-water-risks>, (26 February, 2015).
- 28 United Nations World Water Assessment Programme/UN-Water, *The United Nations World Water Development Report 2018: Nature-Based Solutions for Water*, (Paris: UNESCO, 2018), 12.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Mesfin M. Mekonnen and Arjen Y. Hoekstra, "Four Billion People Facing Severe Water Scarcity," *Science Advances*, 12 February, 2016.
- 31 United Nations World Water Assessment Programme/UN-Water, 2018.
- 32 United States Geological Survey, 2016.

- 33 United Nations Environment Programme, "A Glass Half Empty: Regions at Risk Due to Groundwater Depletion: Why is this issue important?" (https://na.unep.net/geas/getunepagewitharticleidsript.php?article_id=76, (January, 2012).
- 34 World Resources Institute, *India Water Tool*; World Bank, *India Groundwater: A Valuable but Diminishing Resource*, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/03/06/india-groundwater-critical-diminishing>, (6 March, 2012).
- 35 United Nations Environment Programme, *A Glass Half Empty*.
- 36 Malin Falkenmark, "Growing water scarcity in agriculture: future challenge to global water security," *Phil Trans R Soc A*, <http://www.water.ox.ac.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Phil.-Trans.-R.-Soc.-A-2013-Falkenmark-.pdf>
- 37 High-Level Panel on Water Outcome Document, *Making Every Drop Count: An Agenda for Water Action*, (Washington, DC: 2018).
- 38 Nikos Alexandratos and Jelle Bruinsma, *World Agriculture Toward 2030/2050: The 2012 Revision*, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/ap106e/ap106e.pdf>, (Rome: FAO, June 2012).
- 39 UN Water, *International Decade for Action, "WATER FOR LIFE" 2005-2015*, <http://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/scarcity.shtml>, (24 November, 2014).
- 40 A.Y. Hoekstra, "Water Security of Nations: How International Trade Affects National Water Scarcity and Dependency," in *Threats to Global Water Security*, http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-90-481-2344-5_3, NATO Science for Peace and Security Series C: Environmental Security, 2009, 27-36.
- 41 Arjen Y. Hoekstra, "The hidden water resource use behind meat and dairy," *Animal Frontiers*, <http://www.waterfootprint.org/Reports/Hoekstra-2012-Water-Meat-Dairy.pdf>, (April, 2012).
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Esa Valierronen, and Iina Hellsten, "From 'Burning Library' to 'Green Medicine': the role of metaphors in communicating biodiversity," *Science Communication*, 24, (1 December, 2002) 229-245.
- 44 Gerardo Ceballos, Paul R. Ehrlich, Anthony D. Barnosky, Andrés García, Robert M. Pringle, and Todd M. Palmer, "Accelerated modern human-induced species losses: Entering the sixth mass extinction," *Science Advances*, 19 June, 2015.
- 45 International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 'Table 1: Numbers of threatened species by major groups of organisms (1996-2018),' IUCN Red List, http://cmsdocs.s3.amazonaws.com/summarystats/20181_Summary_Stats_Page_Documents/2018_1_RL_Stats_Table_1.pdf, (5 October, 2018).
- 46 Author calculations based on data in International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), 'Table 1: Numbers of threatened species.
- 47 Ceballos et. al, 2017.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 The Economics and Ecosystems of Biodiversity, *Ecosystem Services*, <http://www.teebweb.org/resources/ecosystem-services/>, (13 October, 2018).
- 51 Robert Costanza, Rudolf de Groot, Paul Sutton, Sander van der Ploeg, Sharolyn J. Anderson, Ida Kubiszewski, Stephen Farber, R. Kerry Turner, "Changes in the Global Value of Ecosystem Services," *Global Environmental Change*, May 2014.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being*, (Washington DC: Island Press, 2005).
- 54 Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), *Rethinking Global Biodiversity Strategies: Exploring structural changes in production and consumption to reduce biodiversity loss*, (The Hague: PBL, 2010), 38.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4* (Montréal: CBD, 2014).
- 57 Edward O. Wilson, *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2017).
- 58 Box 1 from World Health Organization, *Nutrition: Global and regional food consumption patterns and trends: Availability and Consumption of Fish*, http://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/3_foodconsumption/en/index5.html; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *World Review of Fisheries and Aquaculture 2012*, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2727e/i2727e01.pdf>.
- 59 Sarah Burch, Sara Harris, *Understanding Climate Change: Science, Policy, and Practice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 128.
- 60 FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018 - Meeting the sustainable development goals* (Rome: FAO 2018), 4.
- 61 FAO. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2018*, 3.
- 62 Galen A. McKinley, et al., "Convergence of atmospheric and North Atlantic CO2 trends on Multidecadal Timescales," *Nature Proceedings*, <http://proceedings.nature.com/documents/5993/version/1>, (8 June, 2011).
- 63 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *Ocean Acidification*, <https://www.noaa.gov/resource-collections/ocean-acidification>.
- 64 Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, *Ocean Acidification*, <https://www.whoi.edu/main/topic/ocean-acidification>.

- 65 Heron et al., *Impacts of Climate Change on World Heritage Coral Reefs : A First Global Scientific Assessment*, (Paris: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, 2017) 4.
- 66 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, *Interim report: 2016 coral bleaching event on the Great Barrier Reef*, (Townsville, Queensland: GBRMPA, 2016).
- 67 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, *2016 Coral Bleaching Event*, <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/about-the-reef/reef-health/record-breaking-sea-surface-temperatures>, (4 October, 2018).
- 68 Mark D. Spalding, Corinna Ravilious, and Edmund P. Green, *World Atlas of Coral Reefs*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 10 and 40.
- 69 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, *The Value of Coral Ecosystems*, <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcorals/values/>
- 70 United Nations Development Programme, *Ocean Hypoxia—Dead Zones*, <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/Water%20and%20Ocean%20Governance/Oceans%20and%20Coastal%20Area%20Governance/OCEAN%20HYPOXIA%20ISSUE%20BRIEF.pdf>
- 71 Hounaida A. El Jurdi, Wided Batat, Aliakbar Jafari, “Harnessing the Power of Religion: Broadening Sustainability Research and Practice in the Advancement of Ecology,” *Journal of Macromarketing*, 11 October, 2016.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 “Catholic Energies looks to help church organizations go green,” *Catholic News Service*, October 3, 2017.
- 74 Urantsatsral Chimedsegee, Amber Cripps, Victoria Finlay, Guido Verboom, Ven Munkhbaatar Batchuluun, Ven Da Lama Byambajav Khunkhur, *Mongolian Buddhists Protecting Nature: A Handbook on Faiths, Environment and Development*, (Bath, UK: ARC 2009).
- 75 Alliance for Religions and Conservation, *Proposal of the Seven-Year Plan (2019 to 2025) for Environmental Protection in the Chinese Daoist Community*, <http://www.arcworld.org/faiths.asp?pageID=202>, (12 October, 2018).
- 76 Catholic Climate Covenant, *US Catholic Climate Declaration*, <https://catholicclimatecovenant.org/us-catholic-climate-declaration>, (1 October, 2018).
- 77 Interfaith Summit on Climate Change, *Climate, Faith and Hope: Faith traditions together for a common future*, <http://interfaithclimate.org/the-statement>, (14 October, 2018).
- 78 Hsu, A., Widerberg, O., Weinfurter, A., Chan, S., Roelfsema, M., Lütkehermöller, K. and Bakhtiari, F., “Bridging the emissions gap - The role of non-state and subnational actors,” in *The Emissions Gap Report 2018*, (Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme, 2018).
- 79 Parliament of the World’s Religions, *Walk on Earth Gently: A Multi-Faith invitation to Sustainable Lifestyles*, <https://parliamentofreligions.org/publications/%E2%80%9Cwalk-earth-gently%E2%80%9D-multi-faith-invitation-sustainable-lifestyles-%E2%80%A2C2%A0cop23-interfaith>
- 80 Religions for Peace, *A Guide for Building Women of Faith Networks*, (New York: Religions for Peace, 2009).



IMPRINT

PUBLISHER:

**Foundation Peace Dialogue of the
World Religions and Civil Society**

Neugasse 2
88131 Lindau (Bodensee)
Germany

Phone: +49 8382 911 4500

E-mail: info@ringforpeace.org

Website: www.ringforpeace.org

Managing Director: Ulrich Schneider

Chairman: Professor (em.) Dr. h.c. Wolfgang Schürer

Concept & Design: Hot Ice Creative Studio

TEXT:

Religions for Peace

International Secretariat

777 United Nations Plaza, 9th Floor
New York, New York 10017

Phone: +1 212 687 2163

Fax: +1 212 983 0098

E-mail: info@rfp.org

Website: www.rfp.org

PHOTO CREDITS:

Inside cover: Hari Pulko [Insel Lindau]

3 AdobeStock/t30gallery

8 Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R0211-316

21 AdobeStock/t30gallery

27 AdobeStock/SeanPavonePhoto

55 Shutterstock/Rawpixel.com

87 Adapted from UN SDG color wheel

91 UN SDG icons

107 AdobeStock/Mopic

108 AdobeStock: Photobank; mari1408

109 AdobeStock: Viktor; doidam10; Samiylenko;
vlad61_61; kerenby

127 AdobeStock: robynmac; mariusltu;
underwaterstas; Richard Buchbinder;
xuanhuongho; Gedankenspieler; kworawit;
monticelllo; ymgerman; dariovuksanovic



AT/28/003



Religions for Peace

10th World Assembly

LINDAU, GERMANY • 20–23 AUGUST 2019

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



SUPPORTED BY:



Federal Foreign Office

Bavarian State Ministry of
Education



CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

#RfP19 #Religions4Peace #ringforpeace



Religions for Peace International
Ring for Peace



@religions4peace
@ringforpeace



@religions4peace
@ringforpeace



Religions for Peace International



Religions for Peace International
ringforpeace