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# G20 Interfaith Forum

## Bringing Faith and Policy Together

### G20i Regional Recommendations Climate Change

We all have a role to play in protecting our planet. In the past years, there has been a rapid rise of environmental activism coming from different faith groups all around the world. The “Protecting the planet” track explores precisely how to expand the robust partnerships involving religious communities to protect rainforests, be guardians of natural resources and safeguard ecosystems threatened by climate change. It also focuses on the related approaches and ethical challenges that rise when planning action agendas and present viable solutions to preserve life for future generations. Bold initiatives like the Papal Encyclical *Laudato si!* and the Rainforest Initiative reflect how important it is for religious leadership and shared concern to be brought together. The problems of our planet and the consequences of climate change are not only problems of science and technology, they are also of moral, ethical and spiritual nature - about how we live our lives. This is reflected in the UNEP-led Faith for Earth Initiative that came about in 2017.

Between June to September 2020, a series of Regional Consultations took place in 6 regions: Africa, Arab region, Asia, Europe, Latin America and North America. These gatherings produced thematic recommendations that are collected in this document.

## Asia

### Recommendations

#### 1. Partnerships

- 1. Promote partnerships between faith-based organisations and both grassroots level and policy level organisations working on environmental issues.**  
Partnerships must be formed between FBOs and those working on the environment to ensure that religious scholars, actors and leaders build their knowledge and capacity to be able to properly and effectively impact, influence and advocate for the environment. Those working to promote environmental sustainability will also benefit from community support and behaviour change that ensues when working more closely with faith leaders and organisations. We must not limit ourselves to ecological theology, the focus must be on results based partnerships and action.
- 2. Promote collaboration between faith-based organisations and educational and environmental institutions to ensure that environmental education is offered in all schools and programmes. Education is paramount to tackling the issue of protecting the planet. Many organisations are already working in education but it is important to ensure that this includes an environmental education including the SDGs. This move towards a more values based approach, including ethical thinking, feeling and acting, to make youth more aware of and connected to the environment is essential.**
- 3. Promote partnerships between faith-based organisations and organisations working with marginalised communities, especially youth-based.**  
Our faith leaders and faith-based organisations educate not only in schools but in communities. The world of faith must harness their power and influence to ensure that they are properly educating our communities on how to live sustainably. Faith leaders should partner together with the appropriate grassroots organisations to ensure that FBO-led community advocacy and education reaches all groups and their families.
- 4. Religious organisations must do proper due diligence and advocate for change in governments**

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and organisations who are harming our environment.

Religious organisations must use their power of advocacy to change the way that our governments are working, to change the way that business is working and to combat environmental destruction.

Clear guidelines should be devised to best help faith leaders leverage their influence.

5. Religious leaders should work hand in hand with agricultural organisations and with government policy around agriculture and farming.

The impact of both animal agriculture - the livestock industry - as well as other forms of non-eco-friendly agriculture are primary causes of much of the environmental destruction that is happening. FBOs must reach out and work with agricultural and farming organisations to advocate for sustainable agricultural practices.

6. Form intergovernmental partnerships.

The G20 could partner with the institutions that train religious leaders and increase the centrality of protection of the planet in their education.

## 2. Policy

1. Policy makers should embrace the 'green faith' movement; partner with it, work with it and make it part of their environmental programmes.

All of our organisations must be courageous and empowered to really speak out when the planet is threatened. The 'green faith' campaign should become a global movement, not just of the religious

organisations but from policy organisations down. The concept of theology isn't enough, it really

needs to be joined with action and inspire compassionate awareness, connection and responsibility.

2. Expand the definition of SDG-16 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies' to include peace towards nature (ecology of peace).

All organisations working on SDG-16 must ensure that they are also working on the environment. Ecology and the environment should be included by governments in a new definition of peace and creating peaceful societies - we have been acting for too long as if we are at war with nature. The new definition of peace needs to include the right to a healthy environment (clean water, air, etc.). Societies cannot be peaceful if there is a toxic and unhealthy environment stemming from a toxic relationship with our environment. Climate

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change, environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption of natural resources is the cause of many conflicts and this connection should be highlighted.

3. Ensure that FBOs advocate for greater rights for the environment in line with indigenous traditions' view of the earth as a living Mother. We must encourage governments to expand the consideration and effect of environmental impacts in their policies and programmes. The environment should not be a separate issue with regard to government policy, but an integrated aspect as it is the foundation which supports all lives and systems - it is interwoven with education, business, security and so much more. Giving the natural environment greater rights, such as that of a living being when approaching policy discussions will improve environmental outcomes.

4. Promote good governance with recognition and awards. In order to promote good governance, religious institutions could give prizes or awards to governments who are doing the best in this regard of an integrated approach to the environment. Hopefully this would in another way inspire our governments to really take up the cause of the environment in a critical way.

### 3. Capacity Building

1. Build the capacity of faith-based organisations as much as possible. Faith-based organisations often operate under limited resources and often underinvest in the capacity building of their teams. The world of faith actors, leaders and organisations needs to partner with capacity building and training organisations to be advocating effectively.

2. Recognise, acknowledge and learn from the work of grassroots FBOs. Many FBOs are working on the ground in sustainable, eco-friendly ways, so it is very important for them to share this with others. Guidelines for best practice should be put together, summarising the knowledge and experience of these organisations. Lessons can be given to other religious organisations and all other stakeholders to promote the importance of faith-based approaches. An improved evidence base for behaviour and perception change in communities should also assist faith leaders to follow best practice, which may include working with scientists and behaviour change experts to track impact.

3. Map our existing capacities to act on environmental problems. Capacity expert groups should be created on specific environmental issues to also lobby and advocate to the government as well as companies or factories.

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Through mapping out the changemakers and visionaries within the community and the populations they serve, support can be more easily mobilised when it is needed.

#### 4. Action of FBOs

1. **Support environmentally conscious religious leaders at the regional level to produce a set of guidelines for religious institutions on how they can help protect the environment.**  
Through identifying those in the religious community who are already invested in passionately supporting a 'spiritual ecology', messaging can be effectively communicated to other leaders in their community. The religious institutions that are pioneers in promoting these values should be supported in reaching out to those who are not carrying forward this message.
2. **Raise the interfaith voice to global governments to spend more on financing developing countries in ending their deforestation.**  
Investing in areas which have a higher payoff per dollar spend is important, especially around biodiversity hotspots in such tropical countries around the equator.

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## Arab Region

### Recommendations

1. **Amplify the roles, contributions, and capacities of the religious actors in the theme of environmental protection and sustainability.**
  - a) Establish religious organizations specializing in climate action and environmental sustainability.
  - b) Replicate the initiative "Faith for Protecting the Earth", which is led by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in the Arab region and disseminate previous experiences of the Centre of Environmental Education in interreligious dialogue and in environmental protection practices.
  - c) Support the role of religious institutions in raising the level of environmental awareness, consolidating spiritual values in this regard, and contributing to the enhancement of existing technical and legal governmental systems.
  - d) Develop the capacities of religious leaders in digital skills and technologies, enabling them to use these skills in their services and in their religious education initiatives to raise environmental awareness.
  - e) Strengthen the role of religious leaders and institutions in developing policies and working with decision-makers to achieve the goals of sustainable development - the 2030 UN Agenda.
  - f) Set an example or role model for dealing with environmental issues and managing natural resources in the Arab region, especially by religious institutions and actors.
2. **Support the scientific research and faith centric educational programmes in relation to environmental protection and sustainability**
  - a) Reconsider the methodology of educational programmes on the environment and highlight the role of religions in protecting the Earth planet.
  - b) Support multi-disciplinary scientific research to build up a system of environmental values and include religious texts and references for the sake of improving the performance in the field of environmental preservation in the Arab region.

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**3. Boost the networking, coordination, and collaboration between state and non-state actors relevant to environmental protection and sustainability in the Arab Region**

- a) Enhance the cooperation and coordination between the various ministries and governmental institutions to overcome the environmental challenges.
- b) Focus on the relationships and connections between religions and sciences in addressing environmental issues.
- c) Promote harmony and cooperation between religious leaders and scholars and organize joint community campaigns on environmental issues.
- d) Submit a proposal to rename the Ministry of Environment to become the "Ministry of Environment and Humans", in order to strengthen the relationship between the Earth , human life and health and to establish a link between the universal Human Rights and sustainable development.

**4. Strengthen the roles of traditional and non-traditional media actors and outlets regarding environmental sustainability**

- a) Focus on the role of qualified media in highlighting environmental issues and linking them to religious values.

**5. Further the Engagement of women and youth in environmental activities and campaigns**

- a) Promote the inclusion of youth and women in environmental activities and initiatives in the Arab Region to benefit from their energy and direct it in a positive way.

**6. Establish and enforce the laws and regulations aiming at protecting the environment and climate justice**

- a) Call on the relevant ministries in governments to enact laws and regulations to protect the environment and natural resources.
- b) Encourage the compliance with environmental laws and regulations and monitor their implementation by the public in the Arab Region.

**7. Allocate financial support and fundraising for religious institutions and faith-based campaigns aiming at protecting the Earth Planet and its natural resources.**

- a) Encourage the investment of religious institutions and banks in development in environmental projects for the protection of nature (environmentally friendly projects and green circular projects).
- b) Financial support from the G20 for programmes that promote cooperation between diverse religions, cultures, and environmental institutions in the Arab Region.

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## Africa

### Recommendations

1. **Promote the participation of African Faith Based Organisations (FBO) in international dialogue on global environmental issues.**
2. **Establish a Fund that will enable FBOs in Africa to sensitise and train religious leaders and their congregations on environmental protection and climate change in Africa.**
3. **Request the establishment of a Faith for Earth Africa Chapter and adoption of strategy for interfaith collaboration for the environment.**
4. **Request the empowerment of youth and women, representing more than 70 to 80% of the population in Africa as drivers of change, and the leaders of today and tomorrow.**
5. **Establish resource mobilization drives to take action on environmental issues from global and regional faith-based solutions to environmental challenges.**
6. **Recommend to the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and Ministries of education to introduce Climate Change education, Environment Club and renewable energy as disciplines in the Education Systems, from early stages of education to Institutions of Higher Learning.**
7. **Recommend policy frameworks by the G20 to recognise indigenous peoples and empower them in establishing and managing biodiversity and ecosystem restoration in their territories and for their livelihoods and resources.**
8. **Facilitate the establishment of a regional African hub for the Green Climate Fund; and strengthen the implementation of African Union 2063 Agenda, by providing capacity building support and financing from the G20 to be able to deliver on its aspirations.**



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9. **Establish an African independent body (African Working Group on Environmental Conservation) as a major regional step towards monitoring the commitments of various African states in focusing on Climate Change within the structure of the African Union.**
10. **Recommend the inclusion of interfaith voice, demonstrated via the introduction of Interfaith Roundtables in the Global and Regional Heads of States Assemblies; as a Policy, effected through a UN declaration and ratification by the various Member States, or via any other viable means. This could ensure that the vital voices of the Faith sector are captured at the highest level of decision making.**
11. **Recommend reviews to the selection criteria for accessing the GCF for local projects by Countries under the Paris Agreement to make it more accessible for Countries that have not previously had the capacity to win grants. Secondly, they could also amend the criteria to allow NGOs and Faith-led Institutions to equally qualify for the awards.**
12. **Adopt and enforce legislations against all that constitutes hazard to the environment affecting both man and nature; and implement policies to halt illegal wildlife trade, poaching, land, marine and ecosystem degradation.**
13. **Adopt by the African Union and national governments practical strategies to engage faith actors in conservation as an important implementation arm for the SDGs and the 2063 African Agenda.**
14. **Maintain and support traditional techniques of water management for agriculture by rural households that preserve water, the ecosystem, and ensure food security. Some traditional water management techniques, such as the noria (water wheel) and khottara (traditional underground water channels) are resilient and can be maintained by local families and communities.**
15. **Dozens of faith-based organizations are already providing the needed socio-economic and environmental support; and commending the current practices of connecting faith and conservation in Africa; these organizations need to focus on some distinct strategic approaches including:**
  - a. **Strengthen education and awareness of the linkages between religious values and environmental stewardship knowing that around 65% of educational institutions are owned by religious institutions.**
  - b. **Provide sustainable and nature-based solutions to socio-economic challenges, through their aid work, such as cooking stoves, etc.**

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- c. Enhance interfaith collaboration to fight illegal trade in wildlife as God's creations.
- d. Establish Religious botanical gardens to protect biodiversity and contribute to sustainable biodiversity economy.
- e. Facilitate the creation of networks to promote ecosystem stewardship that improves livelihoods, boosts economic growth and maintains environmental sustainability.
- f. Ensure that institutions owned by religious institutions adopt green buildings standards including switching to renewable energy in the planning, construction and running of these institutions.
- g. Facilitate setting up and running local nature reserves to control farming, grazing of domestic animals, hunting, tree cutting or other destructive practices.
- h. Establish national and continental project for tree planting, organic farming, environmental cleaning, and sustainable waste management.

#### 16. Position FBOs on the Issue Hunger

- i. The G20 should foster and create strategic partnerships on a local level among FBOs and regional organisations fighting hunger, for example, through the implementation of agro-pastoral projects
- j. FBOs to partner with government/ institutions in building agriculture community centres to implement food security responses

#### 17. Explore the potential and strengthen the role of religious networks in sustainable Agroecology: new methods of farming to be energy efficient, water efficient; protect the quality of soil; limit harmful pesticides.

## Europe

### Recommendations

- 1. Promote the European approach in using the SDGs as the ultimate framework and indicator of success internationally**
  - a. The SDGs replace economic growth as the ultimate framework and indicator of success internationally as the European Union has begun to demonstrate.
  - b. A widespread, accurate and empowering spread of knowledge concerning the SDGs and the role of environmental protection become an educational priority supported by the newfound public appreciation for the scientific community and approach of evidence gathering, dealing with risk, uncertainty, and the precautionary principle.
  - c. Religious institutions be encouraged to train religious leaders and educators to integrate lessons about the SDGs and sustainable living into formal and informal religious education. This includes drawing upon spiritual and philosophical values (e.g. prudence, self-discipline, equity and modesty) to help cultivate a mindset in which people can grieve for the destruction of our home, feel optimistic even in times of change, and be prepared to advocate and live sustainable lifestyles. Secular educational authorities should consider including ethical and faith-based perspectives when designing corresponding environmental modules, to heighten the relevance of lessons to people of faith.
  
- 2. Accelerate action and consistency of the use of existing market based mechanisms to deliver carbon reduction, resource efficiency and environmental protection**
  - a. The overall impact of economy recovery plans be beneficial to climate goals, the environment, and to help in a fair transition by ensuring that companies and firms which benefit from subsidies as part of the economic recovery after COVID-19 abide by principles of sustainability. And that sectors required for green growth or change are prioritised for support, such as those set out in the European Green Deal.
  - b. Taxes, tariffs and subsidies be adjusted to ensure that a product's cost accurately reflects its positive or negative externalities in its production, use and disposal.

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- c. Faith communities be encouraged to continue to model the right behaviour through a review of their own investments and pension funds, and operations from buildings to transport and energy, food and waste. They can help educate their communities on how to be “conscious consumers” by aligning their values with their purchases, willingness to share, and how to campaign and put pressure on companies that are not changing fast enough.

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## Latin America

### Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen the environmental governance of local administrations, with the engagement of civil society, in order to protect and preserve our planet's forests, their surrounding ecosystems, and the indigenous peoples who are their natural guardians.**
  - a. Promote research and development into sustainable productive activities that respect ecosystems and ensure the well-being of populations.
  - b. Recognize the territorial rights of indigenous peoples and integrate their leaders in decision-making processes and the management of their territories.
  - c. Adopt effective and appropriate measures to safeguard the lives, and protect the human rights of environmental advocates and defenders, and prosecute and punish those who attack them, and put an end to impunity.
- 2. Halt the deforestation caused by intensive extraction activities, and changes to land use that lead to desertification, soil degradation, and the loss of biodiversity.**
  - a. Declare a 5-year moratorium on the issuance of titles and land use changes for ranching, agroindustry, forestry, mining, and hydroelectric activities.
  - b. Implement a system for the traceability of forest products, in order to assist in cooperation for the protection of forests and compliance with environmental legislation.
  - c. Establish a global initiative for prevention, protection, and response to forest fires, and integrate local communicates into its implementation.
  - d. Encourage research and development of sustainable productive activities that respect the tropical forests, ensure the well-being of populations, and guarantee the continuity of the ecosystem and climate systems.
- 3. Guarantee proper management of water systems, in ways that respond to the needs of all populations.**
  - a. Implement governmental management mechanisms that regulate the use of water for industries, and that ensure that water is used in sustainable ways, and that all populations have access to water.

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- b. Strengthen government mechanisms to regulate the management of pollutants, and establish accountability for those who generate them.

**4. Implement a worldwide environmental education plan to help build global environmental citizenship.**

- a. Design educational processes, from earliest childhood through all educational levels, with regard to rights and duties related to the environment and sustainable development.
- b. Disseminate scientific knowledge and the traditional knowledge of the indigenous peoples with regard to the functions and sustainable use of tropical forests.
- c. Include training on access to information and engagement in environmental issues at all educational levels, so as to foster new generations of advocates and defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples and environmental protection.

**5. Environmental stewardship and promotion of food security to protect populations against future coronaviruses.**

- a. Distribute fertile lands in the public domain for the promotion of sustainable partnerships for food production, with technical and extension services for cooperative marketing, and such environmental reclamations as may be required.
- b. Globally regulate the conservation of protected lands and indigenous territories, in order to prevent future zoonotic pandemics.

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