**G20 Interfaith Forum 2020*: Friday 16 October 2020,*** 4:00pm-5:30pm:

**Plenary on religious action to address threats of climate change (PL04)**

**Keynote speakers:**

**H.E. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen A. AlFadley,** Minister of Agriculture and Environment, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**H.E. Aksel Jakobsen,** State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

**Description in Program:** *As climate change becomes more severe, it is increasingly seen as a moral and existential issue. Different faith groups around the world have strongly advocated in favour of tougher measures to safeguard the planet. They have entered into robust partnerships among and beyond religious communities to protect rainforests, conserve natural resources and safeguard ecosystems threatened by climate change. 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, use and distribute resources, and how much everyone is willing to contribute. This plenary session provides an insight into existing and new initiatives of religious actors in their response to climate change and the ways in which they can support policy makers to push forward the environmental agenda.*

***Summary of discussion:***

Two addresses from political leaders, from Saudi Arabia and Norway, launched the event. They each highlighted the imperatives of climate justice and the importance of both religious beliefs and actions in addressing the challenges. The Saudi minister focused sharply on pertinent Islamic teachings, the Norwegian minister on the need for a “stronger voice” for ethical dimensions in global discussions and the harsh and disproportionate impact of climate change on poor communities. Both highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 emergencies on climate change action.

These addresses were followed by the plenary exchange chaired by Bani Dougal (who highlighted the teachings of her faith, Baha’ï, on the unity of humanity alongside its diversity—a theme that carried through the panel). The six panelists, from different regions and representing religious and political voices, gave presentations, followed by a very brief question and answer exchange. Among the diverse presentations, common themes were urgency and responsibility and the need to work together, to break through siloes of separation. Listeners were encouraged to think beyond conventional frameworks, to act, and to seek solutions to what was described as the crisis of our lifetimes. There was a strong focus on the moral/ethical/spiritual dimensions of climate change and the need for action, at individual and collective levels: to move away from selfishness to selfless service. Several called on religious communities for action both as teachers and examples. Among topics addressed were the urgent challenges to arrest destruction of rainforests, the heavy costs of animal agriculture and meat consumption, the dangers of over-consumption, and the positive roles of youth. There were reminders of the positive faith involvement in reaching the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and, recalling the Earth Charter, the need to see protection of the planet as a sacred trust. Religious voices can help achieve the needed combination of reason and conscience and forge new ways to act.

Rev. Fletcher Harper focused sharply on energy issues, including energy subsidies, highlighting his view that we are far behind where we need to be, the evidence clear in global environmental catastrophes. The communique of the G20 Energy Ministers he found profoundly disappointing and morally deficient: “Exactly not what the world needs,” calling for a continuation of the energy status quo and on unproven carbon capture and storage technologies. Instead, a shift to renewable energy is needed

**Moderator**: **Ms. Bani Dugal,** Chairperson of the UN Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations

**Speakers:**

* **His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis of France,** Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and member of KAICIID Board of Directors
* **Ms. Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati,** Secretary-General of the Global Interfaith WASH Alliance
* **Dr. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo,** Regional Director for Africa at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)
* **Rev. Fletcher Harper,** Executive Director of Greenfaith
* **H.E. Margaritis Schinas,** Vice-President in the European Commission with the portfolio of Promoting the European Way of Life
* **Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp,** President of Green Cross, Netherlands

**Introduction** by Marlen Rabi, KAICIID.

**H.E. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen A. AlFadley,** Minister of Agriculture and Environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

* Welcome. God created planet, peoples and tribes, similar and different. Difference creates conflicts and wars. Islam focuses on relationships. Sharia emphasizes protecting the environment. Preventing evil has precedence over other matters. Methods of protecting, prevent pollution and destruction. We are peacemakers. Plant trees.
* Making use of planet earth for benefit of humankind. Main goal of sustainable development as well as religious obligation.
* COVID crisis, exchange in all fields including climate change. Promote moral and religious values.
* Kingdom of SA: conditions so all can protect the planet. Biodiversity. Long term strategies, technical progress. Water security. Food security. Quality of life in general. Reflected in government approval of national environment strategy. Strategy for water systems. Rationalize resources. Environmental sanitation, water, food, agricultural systems, human resources in rural areas.
* Proud of rural development, community well-being. Climate friendly policies.

**H.E. Aksel Jakobsen,** State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Norway

* Ethical dimensions of climate change should have a stronger voice in global debates. Science is clear. Exacerbates inequalities, new vulnerabilities. Threatens to undo progress of last 50 years. Could push millions more into poverty. Hunger. Every 5th child under 5 is stunted, stress importance of nutrition.
* Most vulnerable hardest hit by climate change.
* Ethical dimension should not be underestimated. Faith communities have critical role to play. Paris agreement, SDGs. Need guidance, all to focus on action. When faith communities are at their best.
* History, voice for change from faith communities. Voice for peace and reconciliation. Defended human dignity. Voice of hope in dark times. Hospitals, schools built. Now need them to rise and be a voice for change. Steer in direction of responsible care for creation. Environment and social stewardship.
* Deep connection to earth reflected in theologies, practices. Fruits of peacemaking.
* In Norway, Network for sustainability and creation, created in 2008. Build environmental engagement. Faith outspoken in appeals to abandon consumerism, individual choices and attitudes.
* Demands climate justice. Countries that caused problems need to take responsibility.
* Norwegian government has regular consultations with faith a well as other parts of civil society. Involved in supporting IRI since 2017. Forest friendly building. Solid momentum. Embedded in focusing on a limited field within agenda. Involvement with rainforest countries. Our goal becomes platform, make rainforest protection a moral and ethical priority.
* Can’t afford to lose more world’s biodiversity, faith communities should push policymakers to advance agenda.
* Essential to secure freedom of belief practice, teach for communities

**Ms. Bani Dugal,** Chairperson of the UN Task Force on Engagement with Faith-based Organizations

* Represent Baha’I communities, share thoughts from her faith.
* Growing fractured world population, finite planet resources. Oneness of humankind.
* Until chastened humanity takes action. Harmonious nature of nature has lessons. Diversity of species, one soul. Outward form and color. Look at beauty in diversity
* Moral, ethical and spiritual in nature etc.
* Requires new conception of ourselves.

**Ms. Sadhvi Bhagawati Saraswati,** Secretary-General of the Global Interfaith WASH

* Need spiritual guidance to get out of tragic situation. Frog drink from well. Getting less wise.
* Earth will survive, humans, us, we need to protect and save. Can we live on moon, Mars. Together with finance and spirituality, etc can protect and preserve.
* Back from vision of world as a bazaar to parivar? Every choice in our daily lives.
* Animal agriculture single greatest contributor. Amazon. An acre every second.
* Redwoods. Protect planet.

**Dr. Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo,** Regional Director for Africa at the UN Environment Programme (UNEP)

* So many challenges. What for extra mile? Answer lies in treasuring values of selflessness. Direct charge of Christianity. Time we prioritize values based climate action.
* Key takeaways. Innovative volunteerism, African youth demonstrating.
* Climate change urgent
* 2020 latest analysis, United in Science Report. Crippling economic effects of COVID emergency. Africa facing loss of 5% GDP, loss of half of jobs.
* Being true to faith following values we treasure. Jesus Christ for Christians. Save all, from penalty. Matthew Chapter 20:28. Selflessness. Philipinans etc.
* Every decision, action, founded on timeless values of selflessness. How we will be true to our faith, rise above every obstacle, build real resilience.
* In Africa, structural volunteerism.
* Business opportunity. Priority to Africa. Focus on youth. Prioritize selflessness over self promotion.

**His Eminence Metropolitan Emmanuel Adamakis of France,** Exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople and member of KAICIID Board of Directors

* 2016 Orthodox declaration, roots are spiritual and ethical, in heart of each one. Crisis more accurate in recent centuries, human passions, greed, egotism. Threat to common home.
* Justice and responsibility to a world in crisis. Crisis in Greek means judgment. Challenge to our lifetime. Invited to think further and to act, seek solutions.
* Challenges globalization, geopolitical, economic, ethical, spiritual. View ourselves as owners of nature. Integral part of creation. Faithful and stewardship of creation.
* Ecumenical Patriarchate never ceases to emphasize that there must be a common goal. Some leaders reject Paris agreement, faith leaders have responsibility to focus.
* Spirituality of a real conversion. Radical change in our lifestyles. Metanoia. Change in way of thinking and acting.
* Spiritual challenges of changing lifestyles. Sobriety respond to appetites of over-consumerism. Charity.
* Sustainable, just, society. Human dignity and rights and justice

**Rev. Fletcher Harper,** Executive Director of Greenfaith

* Grateful to speak to G20. Substantively from spiritual.
* Interfaith. He is Christian. Guided by values worldwide share.
* Wished were grounds for optimism. Committed to honesty and truthfulness, far behind where we need to be. Consequences of change. Fires, floods, deeply concerned. Acknowledge fear, despair, anger. Emotional.
* Communique by G20 Energy Ministers. Profoundly disappointing, morally deficient, cause for great concern. No mention of climate change, unfathomable. Called for bailouts of fossil fuel sector. Need to scale up renewable. Exactly not what the world needs. Called for continuation of energy status quo.
* Subsidies, call to reduce absent. Not on forum.
* Calls for extensive reliance on unproven carbon capture and storage technologies. Profound concerns about these emphasizes. Do not know if they work, side effects. No governance structure globally. Highly experimental. Do nothing on air pollution. Not an acceptable tradeoff.
* Topic of energy access. Is a profoundly moral issue.
* Need to end dominance of fossil fuel. Animal agriculture. Faith leaders eager to engage. Cannot accept or endorse fundamental denial. Reconsider energy ministers’ communique.

**H.E. Margaritis Schinas,** Vice-President in the European Commission with the portfolio of Promoting the European Way of Life

* Represent European Union. Positive development that religious institutions have become more involved in climate change, around 2015 Paris agreement. Not just science or technological. Moral, ethical, spiritual issue. Use and distribute resources. Pope, Patriarch have emphasized
* Values and ethics in debate.
* EU ambition to be first climate neutral continent. 2050. Bundle of ambitious policies.
* Who we are and how we live our lives. Accompanied by substantial resources
* 3 things. Talk with each other. Important conversations needed. Narratives from different parts of the world, how to engage, listen, acknowledge. Get inspired, new initiatives and scale up. Develop shared leadership. Everyone has a role to play. European and global movement.
* Are many ways You can take part. Take active role.
* New mindset, human centered approach. Enhance and fertilize our policy drive. We do not need more voices of division. Across Europe, faith groups. Faced with difficult times need cultural and spiritual resources. Rely on engagement as time comes to think through the crisis.

**Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp,** President of Green Cross, Netherlands

* Keep together, prod. Understanding we are all humans. Born in dignity and rights.
* First shabat, read about creation. Cultivate, work, protect.
* Modern terminology of Earth Charter. Protection of earth a sacred trust. Critical moment in earth’s history. Fragility. Pray for vaccine. Antidote of cooperation.
* Must and can do it.
* All desperately understand need to be together. Take a step forward. From UN 75 years, UDHR, combination of reason and conscience. Need new way. Parable, all humanity is one body. Need each other. New form of cooperation.
* Blessing of youth.

**Bani. Discussion. One question: can you give an example of what can be done?**

* **Schinas.** Regular EU dialogue.
* **Rev. Harper.** Local action.
* **Sadhvi.** Recognize days of siloes are over. Not time to sit this one out. No Hindu air
* **Rabbi Soetendorp.** Find new ways to cooperate. Including religious groups. Glad there is a conversation in Europe. Have 10 years
* **Met. Emmanual:** Everything has been said. Acting as a community. Vehicle to be listened to to all.
* **Dr.** **Koudenoukpo.** Change of mindset. Share one planet. Can save planet together.