

FAITH FOR EARTH COALITION

A global Coalition to inspire cooperation with and among faith leaders and faith-based organizations to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals for a world where everything is in balance.

The Role of Faith in Protecting the Planet

The fact that more than 80 percent of the world’s population are affiliated with a faith, leaves no doubt that religion, and the values, behaviors and actions it entails and stipulates, have a fundamental impact on the lives of most individuals and communities worldwide. Citizens see faith-based organizations and faith leaders as trustworthy and highly networked, with dynamism that enables them to operate and assist in development and humanitarian efforts where and when needed. In many countries, religious and spiritual beliefs and practices are interwoven with cultural values, social principles, political engagement, economic prosperity and individual and group behaviors. For centuries, faith-based organizations have been providing social welfare services to communities on local, national and international levels, being sometimes the largest providers of education, welfare or health services and disaster relief. Appreciating their centuries-old work, UNEP is partnering with faith-based organizations and faith leaders in order to foster environmental

protection and responsible behavior with the Earth’s resources.

With the Faith for Earth Strategy (2018), UNEP has adopted an integrated approach for the partnership with faith-based organizations. By cooperating with faith-based organizations, religious and cultural values become part of UNEP’s efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the Agenda 2030. Such partnerships shall enable inclusive, green and transformative development through adopting lifestyles and behavioral changes that are informed by faith-based and spiritual values. The integrated approach respects cultural diversity and religious, cultural and indigenous knowledge, and acknowledges and appreciates the value of faith when it comes to live in respect with planet earth. Coupling and informing strategies towards achieving the SDGs with faith-based approaches and values such as environmental stewardship or duty of care is the cornerstone for a **common vision that focuses on valuing the needs of planet Earth.**



Buddhist Monks in a forest



Representatives of different faiths at a parallel event as part of the Faith for Earth Initiative at the UN Environment Assembly



Tree planting at Ongata Rongai Church near Nairobi, Kenya

The Faith for Earth Coalition

The Faith for Earth Coalition is a global multistakeholder platform to realize this common vision with the **overall aim to facilitate partnerships with faith leaders, faith-based organizations and people of faith at global, regional and local levels in order to inspire, empower and strengthen action and behavioral changes towards achieving the SGDs.**

Impact: Environmental degradation is reduced because Religious and Spiritual Leaders, faith-based organizations, young people and scientists of faith publicly engage on all levels of society towards achieving environmental sustainability.

The intended impact shall be achieved through establishing a **multi-stakeholder platform** for global interfaith dialogue and cooperation between Faith Leaders, faith-based organizations, young people, scientists, policy makers and environmentalists on issues that contribute to solving global environmental challenges. The Faith for Earth Coalition will facilitate policy dialogue and public engagement on environmental sustainability encouraging innovative approaches to finding long-lasting solutions.

The Faith for Earth Coalition comprises **four Coalition Councils**:

1. **The Council of Eminent Leaders:** Composed of high-level faith leaders representing major and minor world religions.
2. **The Youth Council:** Composed of young faith leaders and members of youth movements advocating for the protection of the Earth.
3. **The Network of FBOs:** Composed of faith-based organizations with a focus on the environment or those working with (local) faith communities responding to the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. **The Faith-Science Consortium:** Composed of religious scholars, scientists and

environmentalists to bridge the gap between environmental science and religions.

The **unique value-added** of the Faith for Earth Coalition is its **impact on interfaith collaboration regarding environmental issues**. The Faith for Earth Coalition is an innovative platform for bringing together diverse stakeholders with different backgrounds and beliefs around the issue of environment which undoubtedly affects all humans regardless of worldview. Caring for the Earth, as a common home to all religious followers, is a concern that brings faith-based organizations and religious and spiritual leaders together in mutual understanding, collaboration and respect.

Practices and spiritual expressions by different religions align with many important concepts of environmental ethics, including the value of the natural world, the continuity between human and non-human forms of life, the moral significance of all living beings in the eyes of God and/or in the cosmic order, and the responsibility to live in balance with nature. The Faith for Earth Coalition connects the intrinsic linkages between faith concepts of stewardship and duty of care and environmental sustainability with governmental and multilateral duty holders, to improve the living conditions of all – and leaving no one behind.

Involving young people – a sector of the world population that numbers over three billion – through the establishment of a Youth Council mobilizes a generation of environmentally conscious leaders who will better influence environmental decision-making processes and act responsibly to promote sustainable development.

The Faith-Science Consortium is established as a bridge between the traditionally secular world of science and the world of faith. Policy dialogue and public engagement take place to link environmental policy and science to faith principles and ethical values and vice versa, while

scientific findings and traditional faith-based messages around nature and sustainable living are translated into contemporary language that is actionable by people, such as low plastic waste, food waste prevention, low carbon mobility, energy efficiency and circular economy.

The Faith for Earth Coalition builds on the recognition that the full, meaningful and equal participation and leadership of women in all aspects of the Coalition’s governance and outputs is vital for achieving the targeted impact. Recognizing that environmental conditions have different impacts on the lives of men and women due to existing gender inequality, the aim is to create an enabling environment for improving gender equality and the situation of women and girls everywhere, including in rural areas and local communities and among indigenous people and ethnic minorities.

Instead of creating duplications, the Coalition aims to enhance the involvement of all members with the fight against climate change and ecosystem degradation and to powerfully scale up faith-based work on environmental protection for a positive impact on the people and the planet.

Shaping fruitful cooperation

The genuine partnership of the Faith for Earth Coalition will be based on **foundational values and membership criteria** which are:

- ❖ A commitment to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Human Rights standards as well as to equality among all humans;
- ❖ Respect for all spiritual and religious beliefs;
- ❖ A focus on the 2030 Agenda and the implementation of the “green SDGs”;
- ❖ Demonstration of interfaith collaboration and dialogue with mutual acceptance and respect;
- ❖ Adoption of the principles of “Leave no one behind” – inclusivity and diversity in regional, sectoral, religious and gender representation;
- ❖ Transparency in governance structure and decision-making procedures (for organizations applying for membership);
- ❖ Dedication to building bridges between existing knowledge and experience of the different member types;
- ❖ Effective communication to engage with all stakeholders of the Coalition;
- ❖ Action in ways that reflect and respect individual and communal beliefs;
- ❖ Transformation of people’s behaviors through their spiritual values.

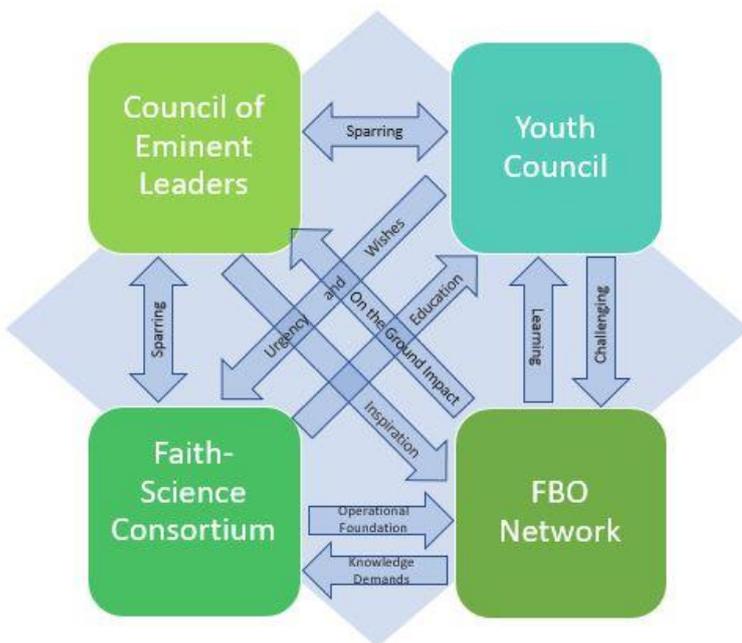


Figure 1: The four Coalition Councils and how they interrelate to become one Coalition

The exchange facilitated through the Coalition platform acknowledges and applies the proven effectiveness of South-south cooperation in enabling technology and knowledge transfer related to environmental sustainability.

Membership is based on formal request and approval by the Coalition Management Office at UNEP based on the established principles and guided by the membership criteria.

The four Coalition bodies have different roles, which arise from the character and composition of the body (see Fig. 2) and from the relationship to the other three bodies (see Fig. 1).

Coalition Body	Contribution	Benefit
Council of Eminent Leaders	Wisdom, Theology, Leadership	Sharing, Interfaith Tolerance
Youth Council	Encounter, Social Leadership	Strategic Exchange, Local Leadership and Innovation
FBO Network	Collaboration, Networking	Strategic Engagement
Faith-Science Consortium	Insight, Scientific-faith-based Evidence	Information, Knowledge

Figure 2: The contributions and benefits of each Coalition Council

In addition to the four Coalition Councils, UN Agencies become members to the Coalition and a close connection to the UN Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development is sustained. Other multilateral organizations working on the environment and sustainable development may join the Coalition either permanently or as advisors or observers.

Activities

The Coalition Councils work in a two-year cycle on a joint biannual topic – the same as the theme of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) – which culminates in a Global Forum as the key event to bring the four bodies together. The work of the Coalition focusses on activities in three areas: 1. local level action, 2. education/training/information exchange and 3. advocacy. A maximum level of ownership, contextualization and trust among Coalition members is pursued.

One of the first activities of the Coalition will be to establish an online knowledge platform linking faith principles, scientific findings and practical work by faith-based organizations on the environment. One major focus of the Coalition is to showcase and connect existing work and scale up existing approaches instead of creating new activities. Other activities include tailored capacity building workshops on green investment principles, trainings on environmental protection for schools, universities and local faith communities as well as holding inter-generational interfaith dialogue on environmental issues.

Funding

The Coalition employs different funding mechanisms: An unearmarked Coalition Trust Fund has been established to which different types of donors can make contributions. Special Funding Partnerships with interested donors / sponsors from public and private sectors providing funding for specific key expenses of the Coalition will be created. Traditional resource mobilization by addressing different donors on one-on-one basis will be pursued. If interested, please reach out to the Coalition Management Office at UNEP.

Become a Member!

The Faith for Earth Coalition aims to be a genuine and productive partnership based on mutual respect and the recognition of the importance of achieving sustainability in valuing the needs of planet Earth. The Coalition intends to create an environmental interfaith voice without compromising individual teachings, but rather maximizing the commonality on environmental protection in each one. The Coalition shall work together towards the common vision of a healthy planet and fruitful interfaith collaboration.

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