



Under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI  
and the effective presidency of H.R.H Princess Lalla Hasnaa

## 8<sup>TH</sup> ISLAMIC CONFERENCE OF ENVIRONMENT MINISTERS

“Role of Cultural and Religious Factors in the Protection  
of the Environment and Sustainable Development”

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Draft Strategy for the Activation of the Role of Cultural  
and Religious Factors in Protecting the Environment and  
Achieving Sustainable Development in the Islamic World



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## INTRODUCTION: THE STRATEGY

The current outcomes of scientific research and events happening in development institutions or local and international organizations, witness to the fact that humanity is undergoing a strong tendency toward calling on the system of cultures, revealed religions and local beliefs as factors with potential contribution to improving the daily and strategic methods of addressing environmental issues and redeeming the organic relationship binding man with the environment. The new tendency of the sciences of human environment has taken body in making man's culture, behavior and worldview key factor in every treatment of environmental issues given the multiple causes and sources of waste and pollution; the need for rationalizing the use of water and natural resources in general; the ensuing spread of sicknesses, poverty, immigration, conflicts over resources; the disruption of the balances of ecological, cultural and social systems and the weak attachment to the religious beliefs which guide the human kind to settle Earth and preserve its resources.

Any talk about ecological systems should take into consideration anything that man uses from his environment including the human element himself with his inborn talents and acquired knowledge, the needs he determined for himself according to his beliefs and perception of his responsibility in the universe. It is noted that the environmental issue is further expanding to cover the different aspects of the human individual and collective life in such a way as it engages automatically the responsibility and actions of man at every moment of his life, at home, in the street, factory, administration, park and in any corner on Earth, in space or deep in the sea.

Scientific and technological progress has allowed for understanding the essence of the environment and the interactions between living creatures and the matter, and warned against the possible risks of any human activity in industry, tourism, agriculture, etc. to the environment in land, sea and sky. Such progress has resulted in legal and institutional systems governing human exploitation of earth and providing for the mitigation of its effects on the environment, namely laws of environmental assessment of projects before licensing their implementation. Nevertheless, environmental degradation has continued to exacerbate despite the multiplicity of institutions, the strictness of laws and accuracy of scientific truths.

Therefore, environmental interest evolved from the stage of ecology in the nineteenth century, which focused on the relationship between the living creatures and their environment, to the science of environment, which is interested in the biosphere in all its components, thus placing man at the heart of the environmental question. Today, man is faced with the responsibility of conducting the ecological transformation after having grasped the network of environmental relationships in the biosphere where he lives, and suffered from the fluctuations in its climate changes, decrease of resources and pollution of its natural elements.

Nowadays, the environmental concern has strongly penetrated education and information programmes, electoral promises, and commercial advertisements. With the implementation of the recommendations of Earth Summits and Sustainable Development Goals, this concern is invading all forms of human presence in the planet. It is even determining border conflicts between nations thus raising the degree of responsibility incumbent to the international community to revise concepts, simplify incentives, overcome obstacles, manage difference and mobilize the necessary technological, legal and pedagogical potentials to grasp the situation.

Indeed, it is an international human environmental revival that should be joined by everybody especially that scientific progress has explained the natural phenomena and uncovered the relationships existing between the living creatures and matter, and that human activities in fields such as industry, tourism, agriculture, urbanism, energy and water sources, have affected the balances of ecological systems. At the outset, this revival was about the natural environment; then it became an urban one, a socio-economic one, a legal and institutional one and finally a cultural one. Today, it is so obvious that the environmental revival will certainly involve the educational and doctrinal dimensions in which man's actions and conceptions about the universe, life and existence match together. The multiplicity of religious, cultural and educational visions to the current environmental crisis, together with the response of national and international organizations, institutions and associations concerned with the environment and sustainable development, requires the concerned people from different cultures and faiths to clear the situation from a practical and scientific perspective, and from an educational integrated perspective that is based on a sound perception of the universe and the human existence and its problems.

If religious education aims at making the ideal individual with special features that serve a certain societal and developmental project governed by a system of values that relies on certain scientific, cultural and doctrinal visions which explains his view to himself, to the world around him and to the purpose of his existence itself, such aim is still the most serious issue that is faced by man's settlement on Earth from since the beginning of life on Earth. This is why the environmental responsibility from the Islamic perspective, basically individual, starts from the individual to include the family, the neighborhood, the tribe, and the local and then the national community. In this way, responsibility involves all usable elements of the world which without exception.

The educational approach is based firstly on the obligation of acquiring the universal physical science and then conducting scientific research in the elements of the environment to explore its balances; and secondly on the divine guidance that includes dos and don'ts in the environments, reward and punishment for any environmental action, and concepts of corruption and doing good on Earth.

As part of discharging its religious and civilizational obligation in this field, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) is pleased to issue a Strategy that frames joint environmental action in the Islamic world from the religious and cultural perspective in one of the universal human issues most linked to the sustainable management of the planet's ecosystems. Actually, the planet is the cradle of man's existence, the provider for his needs, the source of his beliefs and heritage, the place where he lives and dies, the stage of his succession, the reservoir of his civilization and hopes, the museum of his knowledge and experience, the arena of his peace and war, the stock of his livelihood emanating from the sky and land passed down from generation to generation from Adam (Peace Be Upon Him) to doomsday.

ISESCO's strategy in joint environmental action in its different technical, religious and cultural aspects is based on being a common denominator for humanity at large in its motivations, means and goals that goes beyond the boundaries of race, culture, country or belief. Today, we all notice that issues of the environment and sustainable development rank high among the current concerns of the human kind. The preoccupation of diagnosing the causes and finding the solutions for the environmental crisis is now divided among its educational, scientific, technological, legal, social, economic, political and cultural dimensions in general. Accordingly, the requirements of protecting the environment and the need for achieving sustainable development were systematically interlinked in

development strategies. This resulted in some indicators for measuring the environmental effects of projects and the ways to increase the environmental performance of the sectorial policies in education, production or development. Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030 is a prospective initiative for individual and collective protection against energy crises, climate changes, extinction of species, depletion of natural resources and other risks threatening the biosphere in land, sea and space.

According to a number of writers, decision makers and religious leaders in many societies all over the world, religion is one of the key tools for explaining people's viewpoints, positions and the prevalent behaviors, namely those concerning major issues such as social transformations and climate change. Indeed, most of people in the world somehow believe in the importance of some traditions and religious values in this area. Some even state that religion fosters a culture of more protection and sustainability than the culture of capitalism that is based on consumption. In many religions, the environment is respected and is much valued thus requiring us to provide the necessary care for the environment.

Over the last decade, the United Nations environmental action focused on the truth that it is important "to benefit from the resilience of these beliefs in addressing climate change, the protection of the environment, the sustainable use of biological diversity and reforestation, etc. in cooperation with major partners in the scientific, economic, political and educational fields given that these beliefs play a crucial role in sustainable development. Members of religious groups join a larger alliance of scholars, policy makers and non-governmental organizations to influence the trends of social and environmental transformation. Scholars representing all religions and faiths have continuously expressed their opinions about climate change and joined community organizations, which bring together different sects and have become forums for mobilizing and federating efforts to protect the environment.

In this context, this document seeks to assemble the practical steps for field action to implement a common strategy for the Islamic world that contributes to the activation of the cultural and religious factors for the protection of the environment and achieve sustainable development.

## I- BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCES SUPPORTING THE STRATEGY

### 1- Historical background of the strategy for joint Islamic environmental action

Since its inception, the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) has been keen to support joint action in the protection of the environment and life on the planet, meet the requirements of sustainable development and promote international solidarity to help different countries achieve development and prosperity for their countries. In all its activities, ISESCO has focused on highlighting the Islamic approach that calls for safeguarding human dignity and achieving the purpose of human settlement on Earth through good and productive actions which represent the key stone of sustainable development, entrenching the values of social solidarity and seeking to attain prosperity for present and future generations. We herein review some of the main stages of joint Islamic action of the countries of the Muslim world.

- First Global Forum on Environment from an Islamic Perspective. (Jeddah,2000)

With the organization in 2000 of the First Global Forum on Environment from an Islamic Perspective in Jeddah upon the initiative the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, ISESCO's commitments in joint environmental action gained further momentum in order to achieve Sustainable Development Goals before the organization of the Earth Summit Rio+10 in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Forum gathered officials and experts from different parts of the world to discuss ways to find an Islamic space for cooperation and harmonizing positions on the protection of the environment and achievement of sustainable development. It was the first step toward raising political interests in Islamic cooperation in the environment and sustainable development as the participants recommended the adoption of the "Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development" as a framework for environmental action in Muslim countries. They also recommended to coordinate with the regional and international organizations and institutions concerned to prepare an action program to be submitted to the Earth Summit in Johannesburg as a viewpoint of the Muslim Countries about the environment and sustainable development. That period witnessed the issuance of the decisions of "Oman International Forum on Environment and Sustainable Development", held in Muscat in 2001, the "Tehran Declaration on Environment, Religion and Culture" in 2001 and "Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Future of Environmental Action in the Arab World" in 2001.

- The Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development of the First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in Jeddah in 2002, and the implementation of Agenda 21.

The First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in 2002 in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was a milestone in the process of giving body to joint action of all Member States of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in the field the environment and sustainable development. This Conference was an opportunity for Member States to stress the notion of sustainable development, enhance efforts intended to achieve a unified position in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. It also expressed the commitment of Member States to join the international efforts aiming to address environmental issues and suggest solutions that emanate from the cultural and civilizational heritage of the Islamic Ummah as a comprehensive, balanced and deep vision that fully grasps environmental issues preoccupying humanity today in their various manifestations. Indeed, it is a vision that flows from a rich asset of human values that promote and enrich the modern international notions on the environment and sustainable development. Furthermore, the Conference

called on the countries which had not ratified some international conventions to do so as soon as possible. Thus, the first session of the Conference issued a number of highly significant recommendations and documents including the General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development (GFIASD) and the "Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development" which are two reference documents for the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in August 2002.

- ISESCO's paper for Johannesburg Conference 2002 entitled: "The Islamic World and Sustainable Development: Specificities, Challenges and Commitments"

ISESCO prepared for the Johannesburg Conference 2002, the paper entitled "The Islamic World and Sustainable Development: Specificities, Challenges and Commitments" that reflects the OIC Member States. This paper focuses on calling for creating a just international system, enhancing the role of the United Nations agencies, creating a favorable atmosphere for making real partnerships, setting up an equitable system of international trade that supplants the system of loans that drains the resources of developing countries, urging the international community to deter the behaviors, policies and practices affecting the environment and human beings. Moreover, the paper was a contribution to the second World Summit on Sustainable Development as it presented a number of cooperation areas and dealt with the environmental issues in Islamic countries on the basis of the economic, environmental and social indicators. The paper also suggested the activation of some proposals as part of joint Islamic action. These recommendations and commitments acted as an action guide for Member States in international and regional environmental forums. Furthermore, ISESCO has been keen to institutionalize these recommendations and commitments. Simultaneously, it has endeavored to expand the scope of environmental foundations to include the social, financial and development institutions at all levels and promote the multilateral development system at the regional level to meet the requirements of sustainable development in the Islamic world.

- Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Developments 2006 and the establishment of the "Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment"

The second Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in December 2006 in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the high patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, under the theme: "The protection of the environment and achievement of sustainable development to build a safe future" issued several resolutions and recommendations which allowed for laying the foundations of Islamic cooperation and defining its methods. This session was marked by initiating the preparation of a number of strategies, programmes and executive action plans. In this regard, the Conference commissioned ISESCO to supervise their preparation and ensure their implementation in cooperation with Member States and the relevant international and regional organizations. With the aim of enhancing the integrated management of water resources, the Conference called upon Member States to step up cooperation with the Organization to develop management mechanisms of water resources and improve the performance of institutions and bodies specialized therein following the needs, priorities and general policies of Member States. In the same vein, the Conference urged ISESCO to intensify its efforts in the field of environment protection, health and population education in coordination with the national, regional and international specialized bodies. Seeking to develop renewable energy technologies, the Conference called for giving further attention to the issues of renewable energies and encourage their use in Member States in vital fields and for development purposes. Accordingly, the Conference adopted the "Executive Work Plan for Natural Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in Member

States” prepared by ISESCO which invited them to prepare field programmes and executive activities for the benefit of Member States concerned with natural disasters risks, and provide technical assistance to these countries to address them as part of the Organization’s Action Plan depending on the available resources and in cooperation with regional and international institutions. In addition, the Conference adopted the document on the project of establishing the “Islamic Network for the Environment” submitted by General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and called on Member States and the national, regional and international institutions to provide material and technical support to the Network and its activities and provide it with procedural facilitations and field services to enable it to discharge of its missions. Seeking to establish an Islamic body specialized in environmental issues, the Conference decided to set up the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment (IEBE). At the close of this session, the Conference issued the Jeddah Commitments for Sustainable Development.

- The project of the “Islamic Environment Information Center”, and the “Islamic Academy for the Environment and Sustainable Development”

In its third session held under the high patronage of His Majesty King Mohamed VI in October 2008 in Rabat, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco under the theme: “Towards Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change in Islamic States”, the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers completed its structure through electing an Executive Bureau charged with promoting and following up the implementation the resolutions of the previous Conferences, making the voice of the Islamic group heard in regional and international fora and conferences on sustainable development. This Bureau gave a boost to Muslim countries and to the promotion of Islamic solidarity in the field of environmental protection and meeting the existing challenges such as extreme phenomena linked to climate changes, the degradation of natural resources, poverty, etc.

The Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment (IEBE) was set up to undertake the functions of coordinating policies and strategies in the field of environment and monitor the efforts, initiatives and decisions taken by the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers. The chairmanship of the Bureau was entrusted to His Royal Highness Prince Turki bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz, President of the first and second sessions of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers, President of the General Authority of Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, while ISESCO was entrusted with its General Secretariat at its permanent headquarters in Rabat. The Islamic Development Bank and the Islamic, Arab and International donors were invited to provide the necessary support for IEBE. The Conference also called on ISESCO Director General to prepare IEBE’s rules of procedure and regulations.

Furthermore, the Conference adopted the “General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development” (GFIASD) and the project of setting up the “Islamic Environment Information Center” suggested by General Presidency of meteorology and Environmental protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it called upon relevant institutions to cooperate with the Center and provide it with the necessary statistical information and data with the aim of exchanging expertise and experiences in this area. The Center namely aims to provide environmental information, apply the scientific principles which help decision makers to devise strategies likely to reduce the negative impacts on the environment, preserve natural resources and implement the principle of sustainable environment in the Muslim countries. In this regard, the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with some international specialized consultancy firms, conducted

a study to determine methods and ways of collecting, analyzing, storing, retrieving and displaying environmental information and data. In addition, the third Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers was marked by the message of His Majesty King Mohamed VI of Morocco in which His Majesty suggested to consider the possibility of creating the "Islamic Academy for the Environment and Sustainable Development" to enrich research, share experiences and strengthen capacities through training programmes. ISESCO was commissioned to follow up this project with the competent authorities in the Kingdom of Morocco.

- "Tunis Declaration on Enhancing the Efforts of the Islamic World towards Environment Protection and Sustainable Development"

The Fourth Islamic Conference of Environment ministers held in Hammamet, Republic of Tunisia on 5-6 October 2010, contributed to the establishment of a number of important mechanisms for the protection of the environment and achieve sustainable development. In this regard, the Conference adopted the draft "**Strategy on Management of Disaster Risks and Climate Changes Implications in the Islamic World**" which highlights its guiding principles, the specificities of its contents, its strategic orientations and reasons for its preparation to mitigate disaster effects through raising awareness of such risks and developing good governance to manage them, entrench the culture of prevention and preparedness. The Conference stressed the importance of increasing Islamic financing to respond to disasters and the necessity of adapting to them through taking the preventive measures such as building dams and earthquake-resistant buildings, improving the quality of petrol and using clean and renewable energy.

In addition to that, the Conference adopted "**the Islamic Action Programme to Benefit from Adaptation Funds and Clean Development Mechanisms**" aiming to upgrade the capacities of competent parties in Muslim countries to benefit from adaptation funds and clean development mechanisms, enable them to reduce the effect of global warming and climate change. Moreover, the Conference stressed the necessity to speed up the establishment of a coordination mechanism between Muslim countries to promote special programmes of combating desertification, enhancing the exchange of expertise and experiences to address its effects and benefiting from adaptation funds and clean development mechanisms as part of the relevant Islamic action programme.

Moreover, the Conference adopted the draft "**Strategy for Promoting Energy Efficiency and Clean and Renewable Energy Sources in the Islamic World**" which provides technical expertise needed by Member States in this area. The strategy is also likely to enable the provision of energy resources in the long term in a sustainable and cost-efficient way, and use it in many areas without harming the environment and natural resources.

- "The Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development" within the framework of the participation of the Islamic world in Rio + 20 Summit.

The Fifth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in 2012 in Astana, Republic of Kazakhstan, aimed to renew the political commitment of the fifty seven OIC Member States to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, assess the progress made so far and develop a clear roadmap for environmental action to address the new challenges and fill the existing gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit as well as the outcomes of Rio+20. With this renewed commitment, the "Islamic Declaration on Sustainable Development" was updated as part of participation of the Islamic world in Rio+20 Summit.

- "The General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World": Jeddah 2002, Astana 2012, Rabat 2015

ISESCO has been keen to update regularly the "General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World" adopted by the First Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers. This Framework is a beacon that illuminates the path of the Muslim Ummah as it takes into account the Islamic perspective and concepts that call for strengthening human dignity and achieving the settlement of the planet through good and productive actions that represent the mainstay of sustainable development and the preservation of natural resources. The Framework also urged the competent regional and international institutions to cooperate with ISESCO to implement the "General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World". It stressed the need for working a common and integrated Islamic strategy for sustainable development through promoting peace and security efforts; fighting illiteracy, poverty and unemployment; improving the quality of life; bettering and generalizing health services; upgrading educational services; building capacities in education and technology transfer; supporting the participation of women, youth and civil society in sustainable development and expanding democracy and participation in decision making. The Framework further emphasizes the preservation of water resources and rationalize their use, the conservation of soil, earth and biological diversity, giving further attention to the quality of air, encouraging sustainable production and consumption, and updating and activating specialized legislations.

Accordingly, the "General Framework for Sustainable Development in the Islamic World" was updated in the Fifth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers (Astana, Kazakhstan 2012) and the Sixth (Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, 2015). It seeks to attain a number of objectives through activities and projects with national dimensions or as part of joint Islamic action including: building capacities to achieve sustainable development in the Islamic world, strengthening technical and institutional cooperation between Muslim countries in order to build an open and appropriate economic system, converting debts and interests on loans into funds to finance sustainable development projects, creating an adequate Islamic investment climate, developing school curricula to make them in line with Sustainable Development Goals and meet the requirements of the job market, promoting Islamic cooperation toward better use of common waters, preparing joint projects of agricultural production and food security and supporting sustainable consumption patterns, etc.

- "The Islamic Declaration on Environment Protection and Sustainable Development" in COP21, Paris 2015

This Declaration was issued by the ministers of OIC Member States in charge of the environment and sustainable development who participated in the Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in Rabat, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco on 8-9 October 2015. The Declaration was taken to the platform of the Conference of Parties COP21, held in Paris, by the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its capacity as President of the Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers. The Declaration welcomed the organization of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as Rio+20 in June 2012 in Rio De Janeiro to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Earth Summit and its outcomes, the most important of which is the three relevant conventions. It also commended the Conference's urge to ensure renewed political commitment to achieve sustainable development and assess the progress made and the remaining weaknesses in the implementation of the outcomes of major summit conferences on sustainable development. It equally appreciated its focus on green economy in the context of sustainable development and the elimination

of poverty, and the institutional framework of sustainable development to move forward toward the activation of the global Agenda for Sustainable Development and reaffirming commitment to cooperate to achieve the goals of this Conference.

“The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Award for Environmental Management in the Islamic World” (KSAAEM) 2015

The Sixth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in Rabat on 8-9 October 2015 recommended entrusting ISESCO with the General Secretariat of the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Award for Environmental Management in the Islamic World” (KSAAEM) in coordination with the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This decision was taken following the kind approval of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques on 09/12/1435 to transfer KSAAEM to ISESCO under the supervision of the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection, to ensure the management of the Award in a way that allows it to succeed, attain its objectives and broaden its scope to include the Islamic world as a whole. Accordingly, ISESCO and the General Presidency of Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed an agreement of partnership on the “Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Award for Environmental Management in the Islamic World” on 15 Sha’ban 1435 A.H. namely Article 2 which stipulates that “ISESCO shall be in charge of the Award’s secretariat and academic and technical supervision as well as its announcement, selection of winners and organization of the Award ceremony.”

- “Rabat Declaration on Environment Protection and Achieving Sustainable Development Goals”, 2017

This Declaration was issued by the ministers of OIC Member States in charge of the environment and sustainable development participating in the Seventh Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers held in Rabat, capital of the Kingdom of Morocco on 25-26 October 2017. The Declaration states: “Considering the achievements of the Conference of the Parties on climate change, starting with the Paris Agreement at the COP21 in 2015 and the subsequent endeavor to guarantee a concrete implementation at the COP22 in Marrakesh in 2016, praising the Conference’s initiative to secure renewed political commitment to the requirements of international cooperation in the field of climate change and ensure sustainable development at all levels, and taking into account the prospects for joint action as part of the agenda of the COP23 conference to be held in Bonn, Germany in November 2017; and seeking to reiterate the importance of committed engagement in international joint action, especially in such a multifaceted field as the environment and sustainable development where multiple approaches, methods and means of action are at play; we hold the Seventh Islamic Conference of Culture Ministers under the theme: “Towards An Effective Islamic Cooperation to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals”; and reiterate our commitment to activate joint Islamic action in sustainable development and promote international cooperation under the relevant conventions.

- Programmes of ISESCO’s Three-Year Action Plans in the field of Environment and Sustainable Development

In its successive Three-Year Strategies, ISESCO has endeavored since its foundation to promote efforts, actions, activities and programmes addressing the key challenges faced by the Islamic world in the field of environment and sustainable development, namely the protection of the environment and biological diversity, management of the eco-system and water resources, adaptation to climate changes, boosting agricultural production, addressing health challenges, countering disasters, mitigation of poverty,

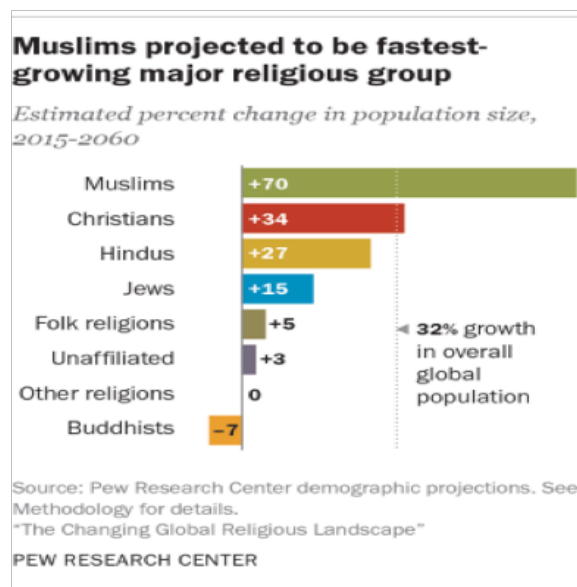
elimination of illiteracy and the provision of primary education for all. It has also been striving to improve the socio-economic conditions, address the imbalance between the demographic growth and the available natural resources, upgrade the technical capacities, develop competencies and skills in the field of environmental management and address the negative effects of disasters at the regional level and the consequences of foreign colonization of parts of the territories of some countries and squandering of resources. The programmes and activities implemented by ISESCO have contributed to overcoming several obstacles and challenges, and allowed for laying solid foundations for cooperation and coordination between Muslim countries, boosting international solidarity in the field of sustainable development, achieving further concrete results to submit them to World Summits on Sustainable Development and Earth Summits, etc.

## 2- Direct background of the draft strategy at the Islamic and international levels

- Participation of ISESCO in the drafting of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change 2015

The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change was issued by the International Forum held in Istanbul in 2015, which brought together about 100 experts from the Islamic world, as part of the cooperation between a host of specialists, scholars, muftis and civil society actors from various Islamic countries with the participation of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy in Jeddah, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, ISESCO, UNEP and representatives of other religions. In of its verses, the Qur'an calls for the good management of the resources in which God has bequeathed to Mankind and the need for looking to the future in this world and the hereafter: "O You who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God; and let every human being look to what he sends ahead for the morrow! And [once again]: Remain conscious of God, for God is fully aware of all that you do." (59:18).

Today, the Muslim population of the world is estimated at around 1.8 billion Muslims, making Islam the most widespread religion in the world after Christianity. According to a study conducted by Pew Research Center, "while the world's population is projected to grow 32% in the coming decades, the number of Muslims is expected to increase by 70% - from 1.8 billion in 2015 to nearly 3 billion in 2060"(Pew, 2017).



More importantly, Islamic values, teachings and culture influence how Muslims perceive and treat the world around them: their food, work, children, living place, and travel destinations, or even their selection for educational courses and leisure time. Therefore, we believe that Muslims have something quite unique to offer in resolving the dilemmas that humanity face nowadays.

The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change recalls what follows:

“We are but a minuscule part of the divine order, yet within that order we are exceptionally powerful beings, and have the responsibility to establish good and avert evil in every way we can. We are also aware that:

We are but one of the multitude of living beings with whom we share Earth;

We have no right to abuse the creation or impair it;

Intelligence and conscience should lead us, as our faith commands, to treat all things with care and awe (*taqwā*) of their Creator, compassion (*rahmah*) and utmost good (*ihsān*).”

- ISESCO’s participation in COP22 Interfaith Statement on Climate Change 2016

The COP22 Interfaith Statement on Climate Change, issued by the 22<sup>nd</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 22), held in 2016 in Marrakesh, Kingdom of Morocco, was signed by 303 prominent religious leaders from 58 countries representing Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others, as well as indigenous people and spiritual leaders of various communities. Among the most prominent religious leaders who signed the statement are: His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Her Holiness Chan Khong, representative of the Plum Village Community of Engaged Buddhism, and Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, and other representatives of religious institutions at the international level. ISESCO participated in these parallel events of the Climate Summit through its work alongside the Global Muslim Climate Network, as well as continuing to implement other actions, including the follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change.

- ISESCO’s Participation in COP 23: A Multi-Faith Invitation to Sustainable Lifestyles, 2017

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Climate Summit (COP23) saw the launch of a multi-faith call for sustainable lifestyles under the theme: “**Walk on Earth Gently**” This call for all human family members and the leaders gathering at COP 23 stated:

“We extend our warm greetings. We represent one world family of spiritual values, faiths and religions who share a profound gratitude for our precious planet. (...) As religious and spiritual leaders, we are committing to make changes in our own lives, and to support the members of our communities in doing the same.”

ISESCO participated through members of the Drafting Committee of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, Istanbul 2015.

- ISESCO’s participation in the Vatican’s activities on the environment after the 2016 Papal Encyclical (*Laudato si*)

The Papal *Laudato si* was issued by the Vatican in 2015. It greatly boosted interest in environmental issues within Vatican activities and focus on relevant concerns. Pope Francis’ addressed “every person living on this planet” that “climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, and political ... and it represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day”. The Pope has

forcefully argued that climate change is the result of over-consumption and greed, while the world's poor disproportionately bear its impacts. This statement was followed by conferences organized by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, gathering religions around environment and sustainable development topics. ISESCO took part, for example, at a conference in 2017 Astana Expo: "Shaping the Future of Energy"; and two events in Rome on issues of global water management in November 2018 and religions and sustainable development goals in 2019.

#### - UNEP Strategy for Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations 2018

The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations Strategy was issued in January 2018. Aware of the key role that faith-based organizations play at the global, regional and local levels, UNEP, a member of the UN-wide Task Force on Religion and Development, launched the "Faith for Earth" initiative. UNEP developed an innovative strategy to engage and partner with faith-based organizations to deliver on Agenda 2030.

The strategy builds on the five Principles: "**People** living on a healthy **Planet**, enjoying **Prosperity** and **Partnerships** in **Peaceful societies**," with three overarching goals: 1) Leadership for policy impact; 2) Financing to support SDGs; and 3) Knowledge-based decision support system.

The three goals largely depend on mobilizing local communities; co-ordinating communications and advocacy; fostering south-south cooperation; engaging in faith-environment thematic conversations and empowering UNEP corporate engagement. Then, Faith for the Environment Program was launched: it sums up the UN's environment vision and relates mainly to early warning systems as well as current and future issues. To this end, UNEP in April 2018 launched the Faith for Earth Program, a document on emerging issues of environmental concern and the role of religions in this regard.

#### Faith for Earth UN initiative at the 4<sup>th</sup> UNEA, Nairobi 2019

The activities of the Faith for Earth initiative launched by the United Nations Environment Assembly at its fourth session in Kenya in March 2019 saw the implementation of several parallel events related to the conservation of the planet. Religious leaders and scholars took part in the activities and discussed the cultural and religious implications of the theme for this large gathering: "Innovative Solutions for Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production".

More than 4,000 people, including heads of state, ministers, businesspersons, UN officials and representatives of civil society, participated in the Fourth United Nations Environment Assembly in Kenya. Muslim scholars, along with other religious leaders, were also invited to present the Islamic viewpoint on the issue. The organizers prepared a space dedicated to "Interfaith Dialogue on Earth", which was open to religious leaders and scholars for two hours a day.

ISESCO took part as an observer in this session. On its sidelines, ISESCO organized, in cooperation with the United Nations Faith for Earth Initiative, an international workshop on the theme "From theory to practice: The Islamic Perspective of Environmental Protection and Promoting Interfaith Actions." The meeting was devoted to presenting the role of Islam and its contribution in activating the protection of the environment and promoting sustainable development, the level of understanding Islamic texts (Quran and Sunnah) on taking care of Earth, and the important role of Islam in setting framework patterns for production and consumption and promoting dialogue among followers of religions.

- ISESCO's various activities on interfaith and intercultural dialogue and environmental action

In collaboration with such partners as UNEP, OIC, Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Crans Montana Forum, the Global Muslim Climate Network, the Faith for Earth Initiative and the Vatican, ISESCO has organized several workshops, expert meetings and conferences on interfaith dialogue to unify incentives on environmental issues. Faiths and cultures share many values, ideas and principles, notably the principle of the sanctity and rights of nature. These are ideas and principles agreed upon among most religions, organized beliefs, indigenous peoples, and many natural scientists. Governments, NGOs and international organizations, including UNEP, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and UNESCO, organize numerous activities and forums on such issues around the world.

### 3. Current background of the Draft Strategy: Charter of Makkah Al Mukarramah, May 2019

The Charter of Makkah was issued in the last ten days of Ramadan 1440 (May 2019) by a host of over one thousand ulemas and muftis from all around the Islamic world who came together under the patronage of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Makkah Al-Mukarramah. Through this Charter, the participants confirmed the moderate Islamic vision on the major issues that matter to humanity. The Charter of Makkah had a special time, venue and participants: it was drafted in Ramadan, near the Holy Mosque by knowledgeable scholars as a reference document that aims to achieve sustainable development through its various educational, cultural and technological objectives and means, within an inclusive universal and civilizational framework that brings together all the components of the human society regardless of their religions, cultures and races.

Besides, the **Charter of Makkah Al Mukarramah** goes in line with the **General Framework of Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development** issued by the First Session of the Islamic Conference for Environment Ministers (Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, June 2002) which has become one of the significant milestones in the activation of joint action on environment and sustainable development among all Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the promotion of their efforts to harmonize their position in international summits on climate change, environment and sustainable development.

It is worth noting that the spirit and contents of the Charter imposed its inclusion as the theoretical and conceptual background of our project on the **Strategy for the Activation of the Roles of Cultural and Religious Factors in Protecting the Environment and Achieving Sustainable Development in the Islamic World** examined at the Fifth Meeting of the Islamic Executive Bureau for the Environment as part of the documents of the Eighth Islamic Conference for Environment Ministers (due to be held in Rabat, October 2019), alongside the **Draft Islamic Network for Environmental Action and the Draft Guidance Document on Strengthening the Role of Youth and Civil Society in the Protection of the Environment and Achievement of Sustainable Development**. The Charter provides a moderate framework approach to religious and civilizational duty of Muslims to contribute to the current global issues, achieve sustainable development and activate the national development plans for 2030 within international joint action.

In this regard, this report draws **guiding conclusions from the Charter** that constitutes an Islamic civilizational impetus to joint human developmental action in both its material and spiritual dimensions, including the scientific and technological dimension

in its common human objectives. The **Charter of Makkah** provides the background for sustainable development within civilizational peace, comprehensive human harmony, and good management of diversity and difference. It recalls the following:

- Muslims are part and parcel of this world with its civilizational interaction and they seek to communicate with all its components so as to benefit humanity, promote its lofty values and build the bridges of love and human harmony;
- Religious and cultural diversity never underpins conflict. Humanity needs positive, civilized partnerships and effective interaction. Diversity must be a bridge to dialogue, understanding and cooperation for the benefit of all humanity;
- Civilizational dialogue is the best way to get along with others and to know the commonalities with them;
- All religions originally call for worshipping One God and attending upon Him by being useful to His creatures;
- Synergy for halting the destruction of humanity and civilization and cooperation for the benefit of all humanity are the way to achieve the desired civilizational reform;
- Muslims have enriched human civilization and can further enrich it today through their many contributions to addressing ethical, social and environmental challenges amid the lack of values caused by globalization's drawbacks;
- All individuals must promote noble moral values and encourage responsible social practices. They should cooperate in raising moral, environmental and familial challenges according to Islam and humanity's shared concepts;
- We should follow the models of responsible global development efforts that deter all types of corruption, apply the principles of accountability, and change consumption patterns that hamper development goals and waste economic capabilities and resources;
- Programs to combat hunger, poverty, disease, ignorance, racial discrimination and environmental destruction require the solidarity of all responsible institutions, including governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and those active in humanitarian service.

Within this framework and in line with the spirit of the **Charter of Makkah**, the Directorate of Science and Technology at ISESCO, in cooperation with the Muslim World League and other international partners during 2020-2021, suggested the launch of two programmes, namely **Training sessions on religious discourse approaches in the protection of environment and achievement of sustainable development** and **Interreligious and intercultural dialogue for environment and sustainable development**.

## II-OBJECTIVES AND DEFINITIONS

### 1- Objectives:

This document examines the impact of religion and culture on environmental protection and sustainable socio-economic development in ISESCO Member States, following the growing global interest in the close correlation between religion, culture, environment and sustainable development. Notwithstanding the success of religious bodies and institutions in ISESCO Member States in carrying out some scientific and educational activities aimed at consolidating the basic societal norms for the protection of the environment in the minds of Muslim youth in the past decades, there is still much to be done, especially in terms of activating waqf, zakat institutions, and other religious incentives, as well as developing media and social networking platforms.

In so doing, ISESCO responds to the need to develop a coherent and comprehensive strategy to address the environmental challenges resulting from climate change and related complex problems.

#### Mission:

Joining efforts toward joint environmental action, engaging governmental and private organizations, civil society, religious and cultural institutions and activating their roles in achieving the SDGs within the 2030 Agenda, and existing international efforts at all levels.

#### Vision:

A world in which humankind live, in harmony with creation, a life balanced between the material and spiritual ways humans assume responsibility of and live on Earth, "He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it".

#### Objectives:

Deepening understanding of the relationship between religion, culture, and sustainable live;

Exploring the principles of sustainable living called for by Islam;

Analyzing the relevance and applicability of the principles of environmental sustainability in the Muslim countries;

Developing Islamic education curricula to contribute to teaching sustainable development principles;

networking efforts and developing the methods of existing institutions in light of the Islamic vision on the subject;

Developing a framework to open up on international experiences and laws in this area.

### 2- Definitions:

#### i. Environment:

The environment is the set of physical, chemical and biological elements surrounding and influencing the existence and survival of a living organism. The term 'environment' refers

to all external conditions and factors that affect the living organism. 'External factors' refer to all the objects and forms of cosmic matter surrounding us, such as air, water, light, heat, gravity and electromagnetic fields, as well as living organisms like plants, animals, and humans. Islam is concerned with integrating the elements of the social environment such as people affected by poverty, inequality, homelessness, migration, racial discrimination, security, violence, social unrest, drug abuse, alcoholism and other social aspects influencing human well-being.

#### ii. Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is defined as "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Environmental education for sustainability, on the other hand, is a concept encompassing "a vision of education that seeks to empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future" (UNESCO, 2004).

#### iii. Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics are a set of beliefs, values, and behaviors that help, preserve the Earth's ecological integrity. They are cultural and religious principles transmitted from generation to generation through various channels, including formal, informal and other modes of education.

Environmental ethics impose certain rules and restrictions on human behavior in relation to nature. These rules often take on general principles and therefore compliance with them is voluntary. However, some restrictions take the form of legal rules to which compliance is mandatory and violators are subject to certain sanctions.

#### iv. Ecological Footprint

The ecological footprint is "the impact of human activities measured in terms of the area of biologically productive land and water required to produce the goods consumed and to assimilate the wastes generated. Thus, it is an indicator of the demand of an individual or group for food products, plant-based fibers, livestock, fishery, timber and other forest products, urban infrastructure, and the ability of forests and the natural environment to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> emitted from the use of fossil fuel-based energy sources.

#### v. Culture

Islam has continued to spread for more than 14 centuries. It includes various world cultures. In addition to their constant commitment to the noble values of Islamic teachings in practice in various regions of the Islamic world, Muslims appreciate the governance systems and other local cultural principles as long as they are in harmony with the spirit and laws of Islam, given their importance in the cultural and practical assimilation of Islamic ideals. The teachings of Islam are often inseparable from the cultural values found in all nations and peoples. Here, the definition of culture invokes the fact of Muslim cultural diversity, which is very important in the context of respect for the environment and efforts to achieve SDGs and taking into account the faith and cultural diversity existing in the Islamic world.

## vi. Faith-based organizations

According to UNEP, Faith-Based organizations (FBOs) are “[l]egally registered international faith-based development and humanitarian NGOs, Religious leaders, religious institutions such as Mosques, Churches and their affiliated NGOs; and independent local community entities inspired by faith principles.”

FBOs have been recognized by the UN system as key players in eradicating poverty, improving people’s health, protecting the environment and thus working toward sustainable development. More than 190 environmental FBOs have been addressing climate change, energy conservation, sustainable use of biodiversity, and reforestation, among others things, working at the global, regional and local levels.

The United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Engaging Faith-based Organizations for Development (UNIATF-FBO) was officially established in 2010 and is composed of 19 UN organizations, including UNEP. Its main objectives are to facilitate knowledge exchange, provide a resource pool of experiences, and strengthen partnerships with faith-based organizations (FBOs). UNEP has convened and conducted a number of important initiatives and conventions in partnership with FBOs.

The 2016 UNEP document on Environment, Religion and Culture, in the Context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, explored the role of religion and culture in the implementation of the SDGs; and different value systems and cultural diversity as resources for conservation, climate justice action, and linking science and other knowledge systems. Attention has also been paid to issues of education, traditional knowledge, indigenous rights, peace-building, gender, sustainability and economic issues and the need to mobilize and engage civil society.

The document identifies some of the inter-linkages of religion, culture and environment, as well as the environmental and socio-economic dimensions of sustainable development. The document is based on the five critical areas of the 2030 Agenda: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. The aim is to “leave no one behind” and reach the ultimate goals first. This shows that the SDGs are closely linked to the religious teachings and spiritual principles of communities. The document concluded with a set of recommendations to find lasting solutions to these issues and to help rid humanity of poverty and deprivation, while promoting prosperity and appreciating efforts to enshrine the duty of care.

### III- SDGS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

#### Introduction:

Environmental problems, in general, and climate change, in particular, are a constant concern for all humanity as they threaten their life. Environmental problems are the main reason for forest cover decline, exacerbation of the scourges of floods, droughts, hunger and the quest for resources, which in turn has led to social and political crises that have fuelled manifestations of racial discrimination, international migration, internal terrorism, human rights violations and human trafficking and growing causes of violence and criminality, as well as nihilism and suicide.

Table 1: The four main findings summarizing the main environmental challenges

- Over the past 50 years, humans have more rapidly and extensively changed the ecosystems compared to any period in human history, to meet the rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel. This has had a strong impact on biodiversity on Earth, causing severe and irreversible losses.
- Changes in ecosystems have contributed to significant net gains in human well-being and economic development, but these gains have cost us the degradation of many ecosystem characteristics and the increased risk of non-linear changes and exacerbation of poverty for some groups. These problems, if not addressed, would significantly reduce the future generations' benefits from ecosystems.
- The degradation of ecosystem services may worsen considerably during the first half of this century, which could be an obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.
- The challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems while meeting the growing demand for their services can be met, albeit partially, under some scenarios considered in the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, but they do require enormous changes in current policies, institutions and practice. Many options exist to conserve or enhance specific ecosystem services in ways that reduce negative trade-offs or that provide positive synergies with other ecosystem services.

**Source:** Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, (2005). Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis. Island Press, Washington, DC.

According to recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate scientists are more confident that human activities have been the main factor warming the planet since the Industrial Revolution. Environmental problems and climate change therefore undermine resilience, necessitating comprehensive solutions that are not limited to technical procedures, but include ideas that enable a better understanding of the belief systems and related characteristics of identity, in which religion and culture play an important role. Human attitudes, convictions and our consumption patterns will ultimately play an important role in caring for our environment, adapting to and mitigating the climate. Religion and culture are therefore among the most prominent determinants of individual and collective convictions and behaviors that are reinforced by the principle of belonging.

Ecological resources, on the other hand, are at the core of every country's long-term wealth. Today, the majority of countries in the world are running ecological deficits,

using more resources than their national ecosystems can regenerate. In some regions of the world, the effects of environmental deficits can be devastating, resulting in resource depletion, collapse of the ecosystem, exacerbation of debt, widespread poverty, famine and war.

The decisive action of ISESCO Member States within the international community is urgently needed to address the increasingly urgent environmental degradation and the related social and economic unsustainability they face. We can thus imagine a world in which each Member State enjoys sustainable and inclusive economic growth, in which everyone has decent work. It is also a condition for ensuring the future of the Muslim world, whose population will grow to reach two billion by 2050, by regulating patterns of consumption, production and use of all natural resources in a spirit of sustainability, from air and deserts, through forests, rivers, lakes, groundwater, oceans, seas to urbanization.

Therefore, we believe that religion and culture can significantly address climate change, biodiversity and ecosystem loss, pollution, deforestation, desertification and unsustainable land and water use, and other urgent issues identified in a shared vision by all nations in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This strategy presents some of the teachings contained in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah, as well as some principles emanating from the Islamic culture in general that urge positive attitudes and behaviors towards the environment, sustainable development and climate change. According to Fazlon (2018), President of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, "Over the centuries, [Islamic ecological] values have been elaborated upon by a succession of mystics, scholars, jurists and teachers responding to real problems experienced by the growing community of Muslims in various parts of the world".

Since the problem at hand transcends national boundaries, the entire Muslim world needs a comprehensive and appropriate strategy on the environment, sustainable development, migration and even technology transfer. Achieving freedom, dignity and economic and moral prosperity for future generations will depend on the steps and decisions that will be taken today.

## 1- Climate Change

Muslim countries are part of the world's natural geography that has also been affected by the consequences of climate change. They recognize that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today and will continue to pose threats as long as global greenhouse gas emissions keep rising. On the other hand, Islamic countries realize that climate change is one of the greatest challenges that humanity is facing today and will continue to pose threats as long as emissions of greenhouse gases continue to rise globally. Islamic countries are deeply concerned that all Islamic countries, particularly developing countries, are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change, and are already experiencing increased impacts including persistent drought and extreme weather events, sea level rise, coastal erosion, the coral bleaching and ocean acidification, further threatening food security and efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development.

In this regard, Islamic countries emphasize that adaptation to climate change represents an immediate and urgent global priority. The Islamic countries also concern to the mitigation and emission reduction in countries and will achieve the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) of greenhouse emissions accordingly.

Islamic countries urge for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, with a view to accelerating the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Islamic countries Parties to UNFCCC, following the Paris Agreement, recognize that they should protect the climate system for the benefit of present and future generations of humankind because of equity and in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

Islamic countries are concerned with the significant gap between the aggregate effect of Parties' mitigation pledges in terms of global annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 2020 and the aggregate emission pathways consistent with having a likely chance of holding the increase in global average temperature below 2 °C or 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. Islamic countries recognize the importance of mobilizing funding from a variety of sources, public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including innovative sources of finance, to support nationally appropriate mitigation actions, adaptation measures, technology development and transfer and capacity-building in developing countries.

Islamic countries Parties to the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement are committed to fully implement their commitments, as well as decisions adopted under those agreements. The agreement formally came into force on 4 November 2016, and has now been ratified by 169 countries—including the European Union—that make 87.75% of emissions. The Islamic countries must take a united stand in line with other developing countries in supporting of this agreement.

Paris Agreement's central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the agreement aims to increase the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change, and at making finance flows consistent with a low GHG emissions and climate-resilient pathway.

To reach these ambitious goals, muster appropriate efforts and provide financial resources, a new technology framework and enhanced capacity-building is to be put in place, thus supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives.

## 2- Biodiversity

Islamic countries are blessed by rich natural resources; both in terms of biological diversity in some countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia and many Mediterranean, Arab and African Islamic countries, and natural wealth such as minerals, oil and gas in Middle Eastern countries. Islamic countries reaffirm the intrinsic value of biological diversity, as well as the ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational, and aesthetic values of biological diversity and its critical role in maintaining ecosystems that provide essential services, which are critical foundations for sustainable development and human well-being. Islamic countries recognize the severity of global biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems and emphasize that these undermine global development, affecting food security and nutrition, provision of and access to water, health of rural poor and people worldwide, including present and future generations. This highlights the importance of the conservation of biodiversity, enhancing habitat connectivity and building ecosystem resilience.

All ISESCO's strategies and national programmes and strategies, reaffirm that traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities make an important contribution to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their wider application can support social well-being and sustainable livelihoods. Islamic countries further recognize that indigenous peoples and local communities are often most directly dependent on biodiversity and ecosystems and thus are often most immediately affected by their loss and degradation.

At the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity (2018), all nations committed to achieving the three goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity and calling for an effective reduction, stop and reversal of biodiversity loss. In this context, Islamic countries joined others in stressing the importance of implementing the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and meeting the Aichi Biodiversity Targets adopted in COP14. UN Biodiversity Conference was held from 13-29 November 2018, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, under the theme "Investing in Biodiversity for people and planet."

It is useful to remind Muslim countries of the Nagoya Protocol, a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity concerning access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their use, so the Islamic countries parties to the convention should ratify or join the protocol to ensure that it comes into force at the earliest opportunity.

Islamic countries are also called upon to support the strategy of mobilizing resources to support the achievement of the three CBD goals, including a commitment to significantly increase resources from all sources in support of biodiversity, in accordance with the resolutions taken at COP10.

### 3- Desertification and water issues

As most of the Islamic countries are located in hot, tropical or subtropical zones that are mostly arid and thus prone to natural calamities, they are no exception to this general rule. Besides, drought is one of most important prevalent calamities in the Islamic countries located in the North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, in addition to sub-Saharan African which are badly affected by drought and frequently experience recurring dry and harsh years coupled with major irregularities in precipitation.

Likewise, intense humidity and heavy downpours in tropical zones often result in dangerous floods, such as those that take place every year in Bangladesh and Indonesia, which severely affect the environment and economic conditions in these countries. However, the most important problem is weak capacity to mitigate or adapt to the impacts of these climatic change related calamities in the Islamic countries. The situation is more alarming for many Islamic countries because of the multifarious problems facing them, in the absence of serious thinking and planning that could enable them to handle these issues on sustainable basis. Major problems hindering sustainable development in most of the Islamic countries are as follows:

- Weak productivity base, stagnant economic growth and rising unemployment in most of the Islamic countries;
- Increasing numbers of poor people, which constitutes a major challenge for Governments;
- The occurrence of numerous local and border conflicts in many Islamic countries, which at present is the case for more than twenty Islamic countries;

- The increasing pressure on the fragile environment, which leads to the emergence of the various deterioration aspects such as the depletion of nonrenewable natural resources, like energy sources, and the excessive exploitation of renewable resources, as fisheries and forests;
- Soil erosion and decline of agricultural lands;
- Water and air pollution, and the recession of land and sea biodiversity.

The inability to counter these problems is due to countries' resources that are often incompatible with the magnitude and seriousness of these problems, as well as with their ensuing impact in the short and long terms.

Food security problems especially after the food shortage at global level coupled with food price hikes and abrupt fluctuations in fuel pricing.

Nonetheless, Islamic countries do possess tremendous potentialities for economic and social development, despite the relative shortage of water resources in some Islamic countries. Islamic countries have important economic potentials associated with various natural resources, such as oil and gas in the Gulf, the Caspian Sea, sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa. They also possess enormous mineral resources, e.g. phosphates in Morocco, whose soil contains more than half of world reserves, and iron in Mauritania, Algeria and Egypt, in addition to other precious minerals found in the rest of the Islamic countries.

#### 4- Poverty

Poverty is one of the biggest and most crucial social problems of the modern age. Unfortunately, the number of people living below poverty line is increasing day by day at an alarming rate. Poverty is a social problem that further gives rise to more distressing problems such as unemployment, migration, crime, depression, drug use etc. Although the nature of poverty may vary from community to community, culture to culture and time to time, poverty persists in both rural and urban areas alike; and in both developed and developing economies. The OECD says that "failure to tackle the poverty and exclusion facing millions of families and their children is not only socially reprehensible, but it will also weigh heavily on our country's capacity to sustain economic growth in years to come."

The goal of any development policy, therefore, must be "the eradication of poverty and inequality and the promotion of sustainable development". Achieving sustainable results is only possible through economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable development.

The policies should consist on the growth of developing countries' economies to generate more jobs and livelihoods, and promote democracy, respect for human rights, and sustainable use of natural resources.

Different measures have been taken to cope with poverty, but the results have seldom been positive. It is the dream of every society to get rid of poverty and its accompanying crisis, but the important question is how can we achieve this goal?" especially as poverty and economic deprivation are the causes of anarchy and instability in many countries of the world.

One of the main objectives of the Holy Quran is to establish a social order applicable on Earth, based on the principle of justice and moral values. All the writings on the

subject are reminiscent of the Qur'an's appeal to an equal social and moral order, while strongly condemning the economic imbalance and social inequality prevailing in contemporary commercial mechanical society.

Sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth in the developing Islamic countries is a prerequisite for the eradication of poverty and hunger and the achievement of the SDGs. These countries need to support national efforts by creating an environment suitable for doubling their development opportunities.

Islamic countries are giving top priority to eradicating poverty within the 2030 UN Development Plan by addressing the root causes of poverty, addressing its challenges and adopting integrated, coordinated and consistent strategies at all levels that will enhance universal access to social services as well as social protection systems that address and limit inequality and social exclusion.

## **5- Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture**

Islam recognizes the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger. As food security and nutrition has become a pressing global challenge and, in this regard, countries shall commit themselves to enhancing food security and access to adequate, safe and nutritious food for present and future generations in line with the Rome Principles adopted in 2009, including children under the age of two, and through, as appropriate, national, regional and global food security and nutrition strategies.

A significant portion of the Islamic world's poor live in rural areas, and that rural communities play an important role in the economic development, it is urged to revitalize the agricultural and rural development sectors, notably in developing countries, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

## **6- Energy**

Islamic countries recognize the important role that energy plays in the development process, as access to sustainable modern energy services contributes to poverty eradication, saves lives, improves health and helps provide basic human needs. As these services are essential to social inclusion and gender equality, energy is also a key input to production. The most significant challenge facing States is therefore universal access to modern and sustainable energy services, particularly the poor who are unable to pay for these services even when they are available. Further action must be taken to improve this situation, including by mobilizing adequate financial resources, in order to provide these services in safe, affordable, economically sound and socially and environmentally acceptable ways in developing countries.

## **7- Sustainable Tourism**

Tourism, if well planned and managed, can make a significant contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development, have close links to other sectors, and create opportunities for decent business. We recognize the need to support sustainable tourism and related capacity-building activities that promote environmental awareness, conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, vegetation, biodiversity, ecosystems

and cultural diversity, and improve the well-being and livelihoods of communities by supporting their local economies and the human and natural environment as a whole.

Islamic countries are therefore racing against time to encourage investment in sustainable tourism, including ecotourism and cultural tourism, through means such as creating small and medium-sized enterprises, easing access to finance, and setting up microcredit initiatives for entrepreneurs among indigenous peoples and local communities in areas with high potential for ecotourism. In this regard, we stress the importance of developing appropriate guidelines and regulations, where necessary, in accordance with national priorities and legislation with a view to promoting and supporting sustainable tourism.

## **8- Sustainable Transport**

Transportation and mobility are central to sustainable development as sustainable transportation can enhance economic growth as well as improving accessibility. We must recognize the importance of efficient transport of people and goods, access to environmentally sound, safe and affordable transport as a means of improving social justice and health, the resilience of cities, the linkages between urban centers and rural areas, and the productivity of rural areas. In this regard, road safety makes part of our efforts to achieve sustainable development.

There is currently an urgent need to develop sustainable transport networks, including energy-efficient multimodal transport networks, in particular, public transport networks, clean-fuel vehicles and improved transport networks in rural areas. It is also necessary to promote an integrated approach to policy making at national, regional and local levels in transport services and networks for sustainable development. We must also take into account the development needs of developing countries, particularly with regard to the challenges of road construction, the isolation of some of their regions and the creation of sustainable transit networks.

## **9- Health and Population**

Islamic countries recognize that health is a precondition for, an outcome of, and an indicator of all three dimensions of sustainable development because its goals can only be achieved in the absence of a high prevalence of debilitating communicable and non-communicable diseases, and where populations can reach a state of physical, mental and social well-being. We have established in our conscience that work on the social and environmental determinants of health, both for the poor, vulnerable groups and the population as a whole, is important for equitable and healthy societies, which justifies the call for the full realization of the right to enjoy the highest attainable level of physical and mental health. Islamic countries also recognize the importance of universal healthcare to promote health, social cohesion and sustainable human and economic development. We undertake to strengthen health systems to provide equitable universal coverage, which justifies the call for the involvement of all relevant actors in coordinated multi-sectoral action to urgently address the health needs of the population.

## **10- Oceans and Seas**

Islamic countries recognize that oceans, seas and coastal areas form an integrated and essential component of the Earth's ecosystem and are critical to sustaining it and that international law, as reflected in United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS), provides the legal framework for the conservation and the sustainable use of the oceans and their resources. It is important for sustainable development in Muslim countries to conserve and sustainably exploit the oceans and seas in a way that serves poverty eradication, sustained economic growth, food security, sustainable livelihoods and decent work, the protection of biodiversity and the marine environment, while addressing climate change impacts. We are therefore committed to protecting, restoring, producing and maintaining oceans and marine ecosystems, preserving their biodiversity so that they can be preserved and exploited in a sustainable manner for present and future generations, and effectively applying ecosystem and precautionary approaches in the management of activities affecting the marine environment, in accordance with international law and with a view to achieving the three dimensions of sustainable development.

### **11- Mining**

Experts from Islamic countries and elsewhere recognize that minerals and metals make a significant contribution to the global economy and modern societies. When properly managed, mining offers the potential to stimulate overall economic development, reduce poverty and help countries achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the 2030 development goals. It must be recognized that States have the sovereign right to develop their mineral resources in accordance with their national priorities. They have, however, an environmental responsibility in the exploitation of the resources described in the Rio Principles, by maximizing mining activities to maximize social and economic benefits, and effectively addressing negative environmental and social impacts. In this regard, we recognize that governments need strong capacity to develop, manage and regulate their mining industries for sustainable development.

### **12- Sustainable Consumption and Production**

Islamic countries are engaged in the commitments made in the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the JPOI on sustainable consumption and production and, in particular, the request in chapter 3 of JPOI, to encourage and promote the development of a 10 Year Framework Program (10YFP) and to recognize that fundamental changes in the way societies consume and produce are indispensable for achieving global sustainable development. Most Islamic countries voluntarily adopted the 10-Year Framework of Program (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP)

### **13- Social Dimension of Sustainable Development**

The social aspect of sustainable development includes all social, cultural, ethical and traditional considerations, practices, norms and values that weight in the indicators of the development process. Population, literacy, health, poverty and social behavior are among the major social indicators that can define or indicate the level of development in a country. The higher the rate of population growth compared to the increase in the resource base available in a country, the greater the extent of poverty in the country and classified among the least developed countries. Conversely, a high literacy rate would certainly place it in the relatively high-growth category. Malnutrition, high rates of disease and poor national health would put the country at a lower level.

Perhaps this explains the great attention paid by sustainable development initiatives to social aspects, particularly by addressing the basic needs of the population in the areas

of health and education, poverty alleviation and marginalization, ensuring food security and eradicating hunger.

Achieving sustainable development, therefore, requires the implementation of some measures, the most important of which are:

Applying the principle of equal opportunity in the field of education so that education can be ensured for all.

Providing health care and fighting epidemics and contagious diseases.

Respecting human rights and involving all citizens in planning, in general policies and in decision making, improving woman's position in society, and protecting vulnerable groups, especially children, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Applying social equality among all the groups of society, and creating a balance between geographical areas in terms of development.

Providing basic services in urban areas through adequate municipal planning that meets people's needs broadly in fields like housing, transportation, and the various human activities, and secures a respectable life for the citizens.

Adopting an awareness policy that would help effecting change in the production and consumption patterns that cause the waste and destruction of natural sources.

Establishing real partnership between the most important actors in the field of development at the local, national, regional and international levels administration, people's elected representatives, scientific research institutions, the private sector, civil society and the relevant regional and international organizations.

## IV- CULTURE, RELIGION, ENVIRONMENT AND SDGS

There is no doubt that religion and culture have an important and vital role to play in promoting sustainable development in both developed and developing countries. They are invaluable and indispensable resources in people's pursuit of happiness and development. They also provide a solid basis for a significant development of the human quest for both living on Earth and sustainable development. The relationship between religion, culture and sustainable development must be highlighted and understood in order to raise awareness among researchers and policy makers of the risks that addressing these issues involves, given their intangible nature, in the pursuit of sustainable economic development.

### 1- Religion and the environment

Scientific and technical advances today helped us understand the environment and its interactions between the world of biology and matter. It drew attention to the potential damages of any human activity such as industry, tourism, and agriculture, on the land, sea and air, and then generated legislative and institutional systems to frame the human construction of the earth and mitigate its effects on its environment, especially the laws of environmental assessment of projects before licensing completion. However, despite the proliferation of institutions, the rigor of laws and the clarity of scientific facts, environmental degradation has continued to worsen.

Environmental interest has shifted from ecology in the nineteenth century, which focused on relationships between organisms and their surroundings, to ecology, which has taken care of the biosphere in all its components, putting man at the centre of the environmental cause. Today, man has a responsibility to overcome the obstacle of ecological transformation, having learned about the network of relationships in the environment in which he lives and tasted the disruption, resource depletion and pollution caused by climate change.

Ecological transformation through the religious and behavioural educational process is necessary to activate the scientific findings of environmental assessment and the green economy in the field of production and consumption in both communities and countries. This requires a special educational effort to change styles of life, livelihood and ownership, and to raise public awareness of religion and the environment, in order to achieve the desired environmental immunity.

If man's innate educational nature responds to the same principles in the educational discourse whether based on goals or means, the outcome of the work of man in the earth's environment throughout history is ultimately a real mirror of his scientific, educational and behavioral level that results from his actions toward inanimate objects, plants or animals and toward his fellow man.

We want here to take education out of the narrow technical specialization that categorizes it as a contemporary social science and into the universal responsibility of man wherever he is in space and time and whatever his beliefs, culture, scientific, social or technological level. Man is thus defined as an environmentally responsible man.

Education is thus a scientific, psychological and conceptual situation, which and governs the actions of the individual human being in the environment and its relationship to it, so that the conditions of the environment improve or worsen according to the educational level of the human being, scientifically by knowing about him, and legislatively recognizing the limits of his dealings with what is around him, and morally respecting the rights around him.

Only education can develop knowledge and legislation and ensure and persuade people to respect it through morality. Knowledge of environmental phenomena alone is not enough unless it assumes a legal and institutional form that determines the environmental impact of each anticipated development work or project. Drafting laws and creating institutions will not change anything in the absence of a moral, professional and social conscience that shields man from the desire to transgress.

Environmental education must be a universal human goal that transcends the individual's self, clan, culture and belief to the unity of mankind across generations. Humanizing environmental education makes all humans, whatever their continent, country or culture, equal before the same standards in the need to achieve ecological transformation. He does not perceive unfairness when he controls his interaction with the components of the environment, nor does he feel the absolute right to dominate the methods of their exploitation.

Education is the way to stop any tampering with environmental components and determine their obligations for people. The Messenger of Allah PBUH said: «Whosoever killed a bird uselessly, on the Day of Judgement, it will raise its voice telling Allah 'so-and-so killed me uselessly, for no use.'» (Narrated by al-Nasaa'i, Ibn Habban and Ahmad)

It is also education that drives respect for the environmental right of others to peace and war. This is what we find in the educational order by Caliph Abu Bakr to Osama bin Zaid, the commander of the Islamic Army to the Levant: "Do not betray, be treacherous, kill, or mutilate, and do not kill a child, an elder or a woman, and do not cut down a fruitful tree, slaughter a sheep and a camel but to eat, and if you come across people who have devoted themselves in hermitages, leave them alone."

We are confident that efforts to raise young people on the principles of environmental responsibility can effectively provide individual and collective immunization against energy crises, climate change, species extinction, depletion of natural resources, and other environmental phenomena. This will not be possible without the conscious involvement of all actors, from local communities to international organizations, in the process of behavioral transformation alongside pedagogical, scientific, technological and legislative work in this area.

Gardner (2002) explains how "religious and spiritual traditions have a great deal to offer in creating cultures of sustainability," suggesting to "Educate about the environment by including ecological instruction in religious education." It also is important here to do the following:

**Educate about consumption:** In an increasingly "crowded world" where human numbers and appetites press against natural limits, introducing an ethic of limited consumption is an urgent task for religions; they can make a difference.

**Educate about investments:** Many religious institutions avoid investments in weapons, cigarettes. Religions may also "steer funds toward sustainability initiatives, such as solar power and microfinance. A good example here is 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus.

**Express the sacredness of the natural world in religious prayers and rituals:** The most important assets of a faith tradition are arguably the intangible ones. Rituals, customs, and liturgical expressions speak to the heart in a profound way that cognitive knowledge cannot.

“Reclaim forgotten assets: Religious traditions have a long list of little-emphasized economic teachings that could be helpful for building sustainable economies. These include prohibitions against the overuse of farmland and pursuit of wealth as an end in itself, advocacy of broad risk-sharing, critiques of consumption, and economies designed to serve the common good.” (Gardner, 2010)

In short, religious values and practices are deeply entwined in the fabric of daily lives, and the Ulema (Muslim scholars), religious leaders, mosques, and other religious communities play an important role in shaping attitudes, opinions, and behaviors for management and use of the environment and natural resources and for sustainable development overall.

Thus, providing people with a sense of meaning and purpose is arguably one of the most powerful but least appreciated assets of religion. A sense of purpose can unify entire societies around national goals. Ritual communication has a special place in the movement to create sustainable societies because it has long had the effect of protecting the natural environment.

## 2- Culture and the Environment

Culture is the set of knowledge and values shared by a particular society. Geertz (1973, p. 44), defines culture as “a set of control mechanisms, plans, recipes, rules and instruments for the governing of behavior.” It is the particular lifestyles of people from a given race or who share a set of traditions. It is often said that despite what one does, one cannot isolate himself from the culture of the environment where he was born and raised. UNESCO articulates the role and importance of culture for changes as follows:

“Culture shapes the way we see the world. It, therefore, has the capacity to bring about the change of attitudes needed to ensure peace and sustainable development, which, we know, form the only possible way forward for life on planet Earth. Today, that goal is still a long way off.

A global crisis faces humanity at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, marked by increasing poverty in our asymmetrical world, environmental degradation and short-sightedness in policy-making. Culture is a crucial key to solving this crisis.”  
– Preface, World Culture Report, UNESCO Publishing, Paris, 1999.)

## 3- Sustainable Development Goals

The UN stated that SDGs are the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. All goals address the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice. SDGs are interconnected in such a way that in order to “leave no one behind”, we must achieve each goal by 2030. As a part of the international community, Muslim countries are engaged in implementing the 17 SDGs.

However, the attainment of the SDGs by Islamic countries remains contingent on a shift in regulations, legislation, educational mechanisms, and institutions governing the development process in order to adopt an economic scope that respects Islamic particularity, including social and governance systems derived from Islamic teachings.



Figure 2: Source: UN website

Islamic countries recognize that the development of goals could also be useful for pursuing focused and coherent action on sustainable development and further recognize the importance and utility of a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are based on Agenda 21 and Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, fully respect all Rio Principles, taking into account different national circumstances, capacities and priorities, are consistent with international law, build upon commitments already made, and contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, including Rio+20 outcome document. These goals should address and incorporate, in a balanced way, all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages.

Islamic countries further recognize that there is a need for global, integrated and scientifically-based information on sustainable development. In this regard, it is working with the relevant bodies of the UN, within their mandates, to support the regional economic commissions in pooling national inputs, in order to engage in this global effort and mobilize financial resources and capacity-building, particularly in developing countries. The 17 goals of SDGs are as follows:

- GOAL 1:** No Poverty
- GOAL 2:** Zero Hunger
- GOAL 3:** Good Health and Well-being
- GOAL 4:** Quality Education
- GOAL 5:** Gender Equality
- GOAL 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation
- GOAL 7:** Affordable and Clean Energy
- GOAL 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- GOAL 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

- GOAL 10:** Reduced Inequality
- GOAL 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities
- GOAL 12:** Responsible Consumption and Production
- GOAL 13:** Climate Action
- GOAL 14:** Life Below Water
- GOAL 15:** Life on Land
- GOAL 16:** Peace, Justice Strong Institutions
- GOAL 17:** Partnerships to achieve the Goal

## V- FAITH-BASED INSTITUTIONS AND BEST PRACTICES IN ISLAMIC WORLD

Faith is a key factor that can profoundly influence individual and collective behavior by urging them to think cautiously and morally, and to call on them to quit indifferent behavior and contribute effectively to benevolent initiatives. The UN emphasizes that the need to integrate a religious approach in order to join efforts to preserve the environment and integrate religious and cultural values to ensure development based on a green transformation. Moreover, faith-based values can compensate lifestyles and behaviors for sustainable consumption and production.

Thanks to their potential and accumulated experience, religious institutions can have access to the poorest and most marginalized communities and can greatly help eradicate poverty and development fragility. An integrated approach that takes into account cultural and religious values will help promote innovative nature-based solutions, respect for traditional knowledge, cultural diversity, the exercise of environmental stewardship and the duty of care.

According to UNEP (2017), Faith-Based organizations (FBOs) are “[l]egally registered international faith-based development and humanitarian NGOs, Religious leaders, religious institutions such as Mosques, Churches and their affiliated NGOs; and independent local community entities inspired by faith principles.”

Initiative can be taken to support the work of the Islamic countries in this field, paying attention to practical aspects. We can capitalize on their roles and accumulated experiences through strategic and continuous partnership with key partners, including organizations and bodies in Islamic countries, and their support for individual and collective efforts to achieve the SDGs.

Islam is a religion of moderation; moderation refers not only to the private life of believers, but also to their interaction with their fellow human beings and the elements of nature where they live. Although they are part of God’s creation, humans have a very special and unique responsibility. This does not mean that they have the right to live as they wish without restriction. On the contrary, they are required to live in a purposeful and care for other creatures.

Theoretical and practical means of framing religious interest in development in the Islamic world are reviewed here.

### 1- The Qur’an

The Holy Quran has adopted a gradual and sequential style. It reminded of the equilibrium and purpose of creating the environment. **“And the earth - We have spread it and cast therein firmly set mountains and caused to grow therein [something] of every well-balanced thing.”** (Al-Hijr, 19) It presented the planet’s nature as an environmental field humans are made in charge of temporarily, as occupying it is not an end to itself, warned against corrupting it **“And do not corrupt in the earth after its being tilled[.]”** (Al-A’raf, 56), linking outcomes and their subsequent rewards in this world and the hereafter and stressing on the fact that universal ecosystems are not unique solely to Mankind **“And there is no creature on [or within] the earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you. We have not neglected in the Register a thing. Then unto their Lord they will be gathered.”** (Al-An’am, 38) Finally, it stressed that the universe’s ecosystems are not man’s exclusive property.

The Holy Qur'an contains many inspirational divine legislation and directives for the process of mindful thinking and scientific and philosophical research directed to control and exploit phenomena for the prosperity of mankind. The Islamic world has a rich historical and developmental heritage that brings us back to the golden age of Islamic civilization, starting from the Middle Ages up to modern times. This important heritage emerges. Muslims are proud of this legacy which they relied on to explore the true nature of their development options, and the comprehensive and open nature of the model of Islamic civilization emerging from this important heritage. This legacy already constitutes a superior Islamic humanitarian model for the sustainable exploitation, management and consumption of natural resources, as in other domains. The original and translated works of Muslim philosophers, historians, mathematicians and physicians testify to this fact. They provide a great source of valuable knowledge and materials regarding research based on a humanist approach to development, which explains the recognition of the outstanding contribution of Islamic culture to human civilization.

One of the fundamental principles of Islam is that creation did not come in vain. Every aspect of creation has an ideal purpose and a supreme goal, so all that has been created must be respected. It should not be altered or harmed for no reason. Islam rejects the idea that nature is entirely at the disposal of humanity to fulfill their desires and their needs. The most prominent thing that can be deduced from this Islamic perspective is that all phenomena around us are full of meaning, wisdom and blessings from Allah Almighty. Thus we should treat them gently and wisely as the Quran commanded: **"And We did not create the heaven and earth and that between them in play"** (Al-Anbya, 16)

## 2- Sunnah

The Qur'an presents the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as "mercy for all creation" and "best example" and role model to be emulated by Muslims in their life. **"Verily, in the Apostle of God, you have a good example for everyone who looks forward [with hope and awe] to God and the Last Day, and remembers God unceasingly"** (Al-Ahzab, 21).

According to Sunnah, the Prophet (PBUH) protected the rights of all living beings and prohibited killing living beings for sport.

He ordered his companions and others to conserve water in all uses even during wudoo', not to cut trees unnecessarily or unknowingly, and earn the reward for planting, as he said, "If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and you can plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it." He forbade a man who took some young birds from their nest and ordered him to return them to their mother. He also ordered the ants not to be killed, and that was when a man burned an ants' nest so the Prophet (PBUH) told him, "Put it out, put it out!"

The Sunnah also mentions:

- Establishing inviolable zones (*harams*) around Makkah and Al-Madinah, within which native plants may not be felled or cut and wild animals may not be hunted or disturbed; Established protected areas (*himas*) for the conservation and sustainable use of rangelands, plant cover, and wildlife;
- Living a frugal life, free of excess, waste, and ostentation;
- Renewing and recycling meager possessions by repairing or giving them away;
- Eating simple, healthy food, which only occasionally included meat;
- Contemplating the universe.

The prophetic biography and sayings and the biography of the Sahaba are full of examples of mercy with creation. We cannot review here all that is said about the rewarded planting, the preservation of water, kindness with animals, social solidarity, the preservation of the right of women and orphans, and the dissemination of peace and doing good deeds to develop the Earth.

### 3- Mosques:

Mosques play important roles both in the performance of worship and in building social and economic ties in local communities. The mosque provides a strategic platform to address the challenges facing societies as places for:

**Social upbringing:** it can be a place to connect prayer and social purposes, such as helping each other;

**Life-long learning and education:** Muslim countries also seek to make the mosque a place of da'wa and hub for anyone who has questions about Islam. so it should be an open beacon to educate and enlighten society and fight illiteracy;

**Observing religious occasions:** The mosque is also a space for religious gathering, celebration of belonging and pride to interact for the good of the Islamic nation;

**Congregation and debates:** According to Sunnah, the Prophet (PBUH) would meet with his companions in the mosque to discuss and make decisions on important issues...

In order to address the common challenges facing the environment, the mosque is a place of learning and transmission of religious knowledge and contemporary knowledge of nature and the environment. Islamic countries are working to activate the roles of the mosque of spreading awareness of the need to protect the environment and respect for nature and the development of eco-friendliness in Islamic countries. The Friday sermon should be used to encourage sustainable lifestyles and support the spiritual aspect of respect for nature and creation.

In short, mosques can play a central role in raising awareness about environmental conservation and climate change. Friday sermons can also be used to enlighten society, promote sustainable lifestyles and encourage respect for creation for the Creator's satisfaction.

### 4- Ulema

Religious scholars have played an important role in Muslim societies, especially in the operation of large institutions, such as education, the judiciary, jurisprudence and the administration of endowments, during various successive periods in the history of the Islamic world. However, religious scholars are rarely involved in addressing environmental principles from an Islamic perspective and raising awareness of the importance of caring for creation. In this regard, religious scholars can guide and encourage Muslims to take care of the environment in their daily practices as a first step towards future actions with greater impact for the entire Muslim Ummah. Thus, Muslim countries should support religious scholars in developing education and informing the Muslim Ummah.

In addition, there is a need to enable religious scholars and imams to understand contemporary environmental science and issues, and to exchange dialogue and facilitation in order to engage this group of influencers in important environmental issues

and challenges related to environmental conservation and climate change. Islamic countries should also promote the role of Islamic schools, universities, and zawiya, to work together to develop education in terms of both theoretical and academic approaches and common practices. Environmental issues can be an opportunity for more effective collaboration between religious scholars, environmental scholars, researchers, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. It is worth mentioning that many environmental NGOs working in Islamic countries face challenges in identifying the shortest ways to deepen the community's awareness of environmental issues.

However, Muslim countries can concentrate their efforts in supporting some carefully selected religious scholarly NGOs in order to achieve sustainable development, particularly by enabling them to engage in existing funding patterns, especially those granted and sponsored by Islamic charities such as spending, charity and waqf for the implementation of programs and activities with environmental objectives.

Activities to be implemented with religious scholars should also be part of complementing the current efforts of national, regional and international bodies and organizations such as the OIC and the United Nations. At the country level, Muslim countries can focus on formal and informal education systems, including mosques, given their roles in Muslim societies. They should also coordinate with relevant national bodies and agencies and make use of all available means of communication, as well as optimize the use of relevant networks based on short, medium and long-term objectives.

## 5- Hajj

The nature and rituals of Hajj, as one of the five pillars of Islam, enables it to play an important role in communicating on issues related to the life of Muslims. It is performed by millions of Muslims of all walks of life, using various means of transport, consuming large quantities of food, water and leaving behind waste. Therefore, performing hajj is a opportunity to raise environmental awareness and exchange between people about best practices in respecting the environment in the Holy Land and elsewhere.

The decision to perform the Hajj also creates greater harmony between our physical, spiritual and moral sides. From the moment, we express our intention to perform the Hajj, our actions must reflect our attachment to Allah through our prayers and how we treat others, nature and other creatures in our country before leaving for Hajj.

Some associations in the Islamic world have compiled the Green Guide for Hajj, which reminds pilgrims of environmental responsibility in traveling, performing rituals, drinking water, throwing garbage, shaving after Tawaf, helping others, avoiding crowding, and other practices commended by the righteous Islamic Law. The guide also recommends the implementation of similar measures in the fields of cultural and ecotourism, taking into account sustainable lifestyles in the Islamic world.

## 6- Funding, zakat, Waqf and institutions of charity

Islamic finance can play a critical role in supporting the implementation and achievement of the SDGs. Islamic finance has enormous untapped potential as a large and unconventional source of financing for the SDGs and meeting the related funding needs. The Zakat pillar of Islam, if organized, can also play an important role in the social dimensions of sustainable development. In addition to environmental awqaf, Islamic history has seen exemplary models in protecting animals, developing green spaces and so on.

Islamic finance is growing at a rapid pace of 10-12% annually over the past two decades. By 2015, the industry had exceeded US \$ 1.88 trillion and Islamic finance had emerged as an effective instrument for financing development worldwide, including in non-Islamic countries.

## 7- Examples of best practices from Islamic world

The Islamic world has a range of experiences related to religion, culture and environmental protection. Today, we need to share experiences and devise new approaches in this area, and to publicize them. Many clerics around the world, Muslims and others, need practical enlightenment on Islamic principles and their role in addressing environmental challenges. There are surely many experiences in the Islamic world and elsewhere the strategy will help benefit from and exchange among actors in the field. Below is a list of some models:

- **Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Forum**, organized under the patronage of HRH Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, Governor of Al-Madinah Al-Munawarah Area, on the environment from an Islamic perspective under the theme «The Role of Religious Discourse in Protecting the Environment» on 10-11 January 2018 in Al Madina Al Munawarah with the participation of over 100 preachers and orators and a number of environmental protection experts and specialists. ISESCO participated at the invitation of the General Authority for Meteorology and Environmental Protection in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting dealt with the preachers' demand to start diversifying sermons to include environmental issues and simplifying them for the people, and the need to rationalize the Islamic perspective in what is beneficial or harmful in terms of protecting the environment through environmental jurisprudence. It was also recalled that Islam dispraised the transgressors of the environment and demanded to preserve it. The Forum also tackled the need to create specialized courts to adjudicate environmental issues in the Kingdom. The topics of the forum started from the environmental signs in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, sustainable development from the Islamic perspective, as well as the Shariah and environmental laws in Islam, and social responsibility in Islam. The forum focused on the importance of environmental awareness for community members through preachers and mosque sermons, invoking the religious dimension in addressing environmental issues, and encouraging scientific research in environmental domains and Sharia disciplines to be in line with contemporary environmental issues, while adopting the Islamic perspective with regard to environmental social responsibility toward producing and consuming resources, emphasizing the role of environmental education and volunteering in environmental action according to an Islamic perspective.
- **The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)** is a UK-based organization that has carried out activities on ways to explore Quranic viewpoints on the protection of the environment by studying in-depth the terms contained in Quranic texts about the concepts of *khilafa* (responsibility), balance (justice), *fitrah* (human instinct), and corruption through the analysis of both the text and the context on the basis of a new approach. It also managed to make Imams and preachers accept to deal with these topics and deliver eloquent Friday sermons on the protection of the environment and Allah's creation in view of changing worshippers' positions. IFEES has implemented similar field projects, particularly in Africa.
- **Indonesia's experience** adopts the same approach. In collaboration with the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), some actors work on urging people all around the reserves to protect wildlife, through the fatwa of the MUI that the protection of endangered species is essential to maintain a balanced ecosystem. Moreover, the MUI

also issued a fatwa on the Law on Forest Exploitation and Forest Area Utilization. The fatwa reads, "an act of facilitating, neglecting, taking advantage of the burning of forest and plantation is haram" and therefore, "the controlling of a forest or plantation fire is mandatory".

- **Morocco's experience** of launching the Green Mosque Program aimed to build 600 mosques completely free of greenhouse gas emissions using solar energy, planting around the mosque, and water reuse. The Kingdom of Morocco is expected to follow the example of other countries that have learned about the experience in order to build sustainable and environmentally friendly mosques.

## **VI- TOWARD A STRATEGY FOR ACTIVATION OF THE ROLE OF CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS FACTORS IN PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD**

### **1- Place of the Strategy among ISESCO's Strategies and Islamic Conferences of Environment Ministers**

Since 2002, ISESCO has hosted the biennial Islamic Conference of Ministers of the Environment (ICMI) in one of its Member States to discuss issues of environment and sustainable development. During each session, the Conference focuses on a central issue and adopts strategic documents related to the environment. Successive sessions of the Conference have adopted strategies, documents and plans for their implementation in the areas of integrated water resources management, natural disaster management, renewable energies and green economy, as well as supporting documents such as the General Framework of the Islamic Agenda for Sustainable Development (GFIASD), following the footsteps of the international community and global cooperation on the most prominent issues related to biodiversity, desertification, ecological migration, food security, pollution, natural resource degradation, and technology transfer.

Aware of the need for a cultural and religious contribution to the often technical discussions, ISESCO has been working since 2000 to develop an Islamic vision and joint action programs on key environmental issues and sustainable development. Since 2009, ISESCO has been actively involved with other partners, experts and religious scholars who met in Istanbul as part of the development of the Muslim Seven Year Action Plan on Climate Change in preparation for the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change. The document was presented to the UN Secretary-General in the form of plans or outlines of the efforts of different religions during the ceremony organized under the auspices of the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) at Windsor Palace in the UK.

The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, adopted at the International Forum on Climate Change, also held in Istanbul in August 2015 by religious scholars and non-governmental organizations, was another culmination of ISESCO's contribution in supporting the reconciliation of prominent environmental experts, clerics, preachers and civil society actors engaged in this area. The ICMI's President presented an Islamic declaration on environmental protection and sustainable development during the 21 Climate Conference in Paris in 2015. During the ensuing climate conferences, ISESCO also engaged in official and parallel action in cooperation with different partners in parallel with the implementation of the annual activities of ISESCO Action Plan related to the role of the clergy in environmental education and rational use of natural resources.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Islamic Conference of Ministers of the Environment to be held in Morocco on October 2019 has chosen as theme, "The role of Cultural and Religious Factors in Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development". The meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Conference will take place in April 2019 in Rabat, and will discuss the agenda and documents of the conference, including:

- Draft strategy of the activation of the role of cultural and religious factors in protecting environment and achieving sustainable development in the Islamic World;
- Draft project for establishing the Islamic Network for Joint Environmental Action based on Religious Practices;
- Draft guiding document on promoting the role of youth and civil society in protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

## 2- Draft strategy of the activation of the role of cultural and religious factors in protecting environment and achieving sustainable development in the Islamic World

### a- Introduction: objectives and contents

The strategy aims to provide a framework for environmental action and to coordinate and integrate efforts based on religion, environmental, scientific, technical, judicial and institutional management in the Islamic world. It will also draw the attention of the Islamic world to the role of cultural and religious factors in protecting the environment, achieving sustainable development and providing practical programs and mechanisms to improve local and global initiatives and solve the humanitarian and environmental crisis at various levels.

This can be detailed in different objectives:

- Highlight the Islamic view on environmental protection and sustainable development from theory to practice;
- Demonstrate ideas and practical aspects common to the Islamic perspective and international conventions and directives at all levels.
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- Highlight the true potential of the Islamic world to contribute to the promotion of environmental protection and sustainable development in the world;
- Introduce best field practices in some Member States;
- Identify ways to activate the role of environmental, cultural and religious education in achieving better results in this area;
- Propose programs and tools to improve the role of cultural and religious factors in protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development in the Islamic world.

### The strategy will also provide an overview of:

- **The Islamic perspective** in environmental protection and sustainable development taking in consideration the Qur'an, Sunnah and the Islamic heritage practices;
- **The latest technologies and best practices** in the Islamic world regarding the link between environmental management measures and cultural and religious factors in terms of their preparation and implementation. This will include all actors (civil society, public and private sectors, mosques, Islamic education centers, university education, research ...) with comparative analysis of international legislation and practices;
- **Shared visions** and practical complementarities between the Islamic perspective and international conventions and directives at all levels in defining and achieving SDGs.

The strategy of the Islamic world is aimed primarily at improving the cultural and religious aspects of the environment in civil society programs in cooperation with other actors in the public and private sectors. This will include proposals on perceptions and mechanisms to improve the role of cultural and religious factors in protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development in the Islamic world by 2030.

## b- Improvement of faith-based actions at national level

There is a need for innovating working methods likely to activate the following means and institutions in accordance with the laws, conditions, and framework and financial potentials:

### 1. *Religious Leaders and Scholars: Fatwas, Green Khutbas*

Environmental challenges are a new topic in human understanding. However, even very relevant fundamental answers about the challenges of maintaining the environment can be found in the texts (The Qur'an and Sunnah). Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of Muslim clerics and imams, as well as our preachers and community leaders, by promoting a more comprehensive understanding of the environment and the issue of sustainable development. Activists and academics who understand environmental conservation need to collaborate with muftis and scholars as well as academic scholars. Some best practices can be adopted, such as IFEES green khutbahs and the Indonesian Council of Ulama fatwas, that include elements of Islamic teaching about how best to care for the earth.

Religious leaders need enlightenment in an effort to understand the relationship between the verses of the Qur'an (textual) and the verses of qawnyah (which are read in this universe). The Muftis need to issue fatwas that support environmental sustainability and sustainable development efforts. Mosques need to be provided with green khutbahs, which carry a moral message about the environment and care of our earth.

### 2. *Environmental education in the Qur'anic schools*

The environmental movement also needs to be activated in our Qur'an schools and madrasas. Teachers need to be enlightened and strengthened about madrasa-based environmental programs, giving examples of environmental actions to students. The need to hold competitions and awards for the activities of green madrasas, green zawiyah, or green boarding schools (ecopesantren), which are based on efforts from actions based on the ability of the school to take concrete actions about environmental care, for example: energy savings, waste management, planting trees, maintaining cleanliness and sanitation, recycling waste, besides providing education about the importance of protecting the environment and integrating it into the existing curriculum.

### 3. *Capacity building for imams and preachers*

Imams, actors and preachers have a background regarding religious sciences. What they needed to promote environmental awareness is to train them in short-term seminars and workshops regarding the basics of ecology and major environmental problems and environmental conservation. They need to be strengthened by how to use the Qur'anic verses and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) to kindle the spirit of environmental awareness in their societies and maintain balance and efficiency in the utilization of natural resources and protection of the environment.

### 4. *Academic action and research at university level*

There have been sufficient academic studies related to environmental preservation arguments. One example is the study conducted by Harvard: *Islam and Ecology*, there are dozens of similar books spread in Islamic countries. These academic books need to be compiled in a special website. Academic studies at the university level also need to

be deepened. One of the monumental proposals that must be actioned is the making of an Encyclopedia of Islam and Environment, where scholars are given the facilities to hold conferences discussing environmental and religious themes; especially Islam. Collaboration can be done with NGOs and donor institutions, e.g. UNEP, ISESCO, WWF, and existing charitable foundations and aid agencies. These sources must be accessible - through websites or apps - openly, in various languages that can be understood in each of the Islamic world countries. Academics can also develop, translate and edit relevant books and educational tools for the best practices and guidelines of environmental protections.

#### 5. Faith-based environmental media programs

The Islamic world has a very powerful media base. Countless Internet-based Islamic media can take the form of newspapers, radio, television, social media. Environmental actions can be broadcast through these media and also through the new media they have. It is also necessary to target cross-generation targets, especially millennial generation, through new media. Faith-based NGOs can collaborate to use the media, to spread good practice and knowledge. Collaborative programs can be done, such as efforts to disseminate green hajj, or green mosques.

#### 6. Encouraging NGOs with faith-based actions

NGOs can be pragmatically involved in collaborating with activities at the grassroots level. However NGOs usually have an interest in cultural approaches. Environmental action can be mapped through cultural values. As partners, several faith-based NGOs and secular NGOs were able to collaborate effectively so that they could be accepted by the community. Environmental approaches and actions can be readily accepted if there is an appreciation and the ability to convince people quickly about the environment is through their cultural approach.

#### 7. Green Mosques and Green Hajj

Green Mosque and Green Hajj can run parallel, because hajj preparation is usually done at mosques or places of worship that can explain easily, how best to maintain the environment. The governments of Islamic countries can provide encouragement about this effort, so that environmental action can run at the individual and the community levels as well as with mosques, Islamic congregations, and Hajj travel agents. Some apps have been developed, for example the Greenhajj app or i-Umrah, which encourage the practice of minimizing travel to Mecca and the associated greenhouse gas emissions involved-by doing *badal umrah*.

#### 8. Islamic finance and micro projects facilitation

Islamic economics is a system that encourages and can support sustainable development efforts (Hasan 2005). The advantage of Islamic economics is related to the fact that Islamic financial management aims to fulfil the *maqāsid shari'a* (aims of Islamic law), and so will be effective as a facilitator for the transformation of natural resource management. Islamic financial support is based on the real sector, prohibits usury and promotes concrete actions with collaborative efforts, with a view to human well-being, achieved by organizing the resources of the earth on a basis of co-operation and participation (Khan 1994). In fact, natural resources are limited and must be managed within a balanced framework, therefore, one of the Islamic financial efforts in the Islamic world is towards

natural resource management in order to alleviate poverty, within the framework of the earth's benefit as a sustainable legacy that can be enjoyed by future generations. Finance can also respond to efforts to eradicate poverty and fair efforts in building the economy of the community. Efforts of Islamic finance mobilization, including *zakat*, *infaq* and *sadaqah*, can be mobilized towards environmental goals related to poverty, and can also help finance in accordance with the purpose of the SDGs.

#### 9. *Waqf improvement for environmental protection and sustainable development*

The *zakat* and *waqf* are the outstanding instruments of Islamic teaching, which can help many sectors for social purposes as well as fill the gap between rich and poor and mitigate inequalities in society. It can help to alleviate poverty as well as provide the facilities to empower the ummah economy.

Waqf is the most valuable and powerful charity instrument in the Islamic Countries. There are thousands of waqf institutions around the world that have provided much support for:

- Education: establishment of madrasahs, the Qur'anic education and universities;
- Health sectors: clinics, hospitals,
- Places of worship: *masājid*, *musallas*,
- Orphanages, retirement homes and charities, etc.

and have been managing their assets sustainably. With respect to environmental action, Waqfs can be more innovative in their implementation, such as providing clean water, or maintaining public land from that can function as tree-planting areas. *Waqfs* should be developed and translated more broadly as long as it concerns the principles of *maslahah* (public benefit) and goes above the lines of *sharī'a* provisions.

#### 10. *Zakāt, infāq and sadaqah*

Some principles of sustainable development goals need to be reviewed in the Islamic context. We have to re-think the Islamic financing schemes such as *zakāt*, *infāq* and *sadaqah* and other innovative efforts. The Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) emphasize the rights of people who are poor, and obligate Muslims to spend their wealth to assist the poor. The *Hadith* of the Prophet encouraged and guided wealthy and average Muslims alike from the early history of Islam and today to actively participate in building or donating for mosques, orphanages, schools/*Madrasah* for learning, dispensary, hospitals, fountains, wells, guest houses for travelers on transit to rest, and planting trees. Even animal hospitals were established for the care of sick migratory birds, such as storks, and their expenditures were covered by endowments (*waqfs*).

#### 11. *Practices of other faiths at national level*

The Islamic countries should not forget the other faiths in their respective countries. They can be involved or make parallel efforts in synergy towards environmental conservation action at the community level and their beliefs. It is also necessary to provide facilities to learn from each other in environmental actions where people of other religions may be better in their efforts to act in environmental conservation activities: like bio-diversity, cultural and religious diversity is a blessing of Allah. Therefore, Muslims should be encouraged to engage a positive and creative dialogue with members of other religions and cultures to respond to environmental problems.

## *12. Local cultures and environmental protection procedures*

The local cultures and wisdom can be recognized and can be a strong foundation in carrying out environmental actions. Every culture can be explored by rediscovering legacy related to local wisdom. For example in the world of conservation known as *hima* and *harim* terms in the middle east, or prohibited forests and prohibited rivers in Sumatra that have been recommended by the IUCN will be able to participate to assist the scheme of sustainable use of natural resources and reach the Aichi Targets. Those examples is included the two sacred sanctuaries (*harams*) that encompass and surround the cities of Makkah and Al-Madinah; the *hima*, which reflects ethical principles of care and governance laid down by the Prophet Muhammad; and a variety of community conserved areas such as *harim* zones, *hawtah*, *agdal*, *mahjar*, *qoroq*, *adat*, *doviste*, *mazarat*, and *karamat*. These sometimes include conservation measures inherited from previous faith communities, deemed compatible with Islamic teachings.

## *13. National networks and best practice exchange*

National networks related to global and local environmental actions can be mobilized by providing support and facilitation, including in contributing to strengthening faith groups. Environmental activities related to technical matters regarding direct and appropriate action require cooperation that can complement each other. In almost the entire Islamic world, environmental and conservation organizations have developed both national and local scales that can network and work together to accelerate environmental actions. There is a need for exchange of information and good practice through the networks. This national network synergy can form coalitions for mass action, have a certain basic faith, will easily accept an action that relates to their common faith.

## *14. Creating awards for best faith-based actions*

There need to be governmental institutions that provide appreciation for environmental activities at the national level, and if possible at the level of the Islamic world, at the international level. Institutions such as ISESCO can play an active role in global initiation such as awarding outstanding citizens or organizations that have made a real contribution to the development and protection of the environment. The appreciation of heroes in the community and community is expected to be a role model for the surrounding community and others.

### *c- Institutional actions at international level*

#### *1. Openness to international organizations and environment-specific legislations*

The activation of joint environmental action requires learning from the experiences, institutions and past legislations in the coordination between faith-based institutions inside and outside the Islamic world. For instance, we need to cooperate with the UN Environment's "Faith for Earth Initiative", mentioned earlier in this document.

These aspects can be elaborated on in the Strategy's executive documents. They may also be incorporated in the activities as may be required by the recommendations of the Eighth Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers. In addition, they may form a subject of discussion between OIC Member States.

## 2. Dialogue among faith-based institutions in the Islamic world

To strengthen this action, facilitation of forums is needed to exchange ideas and opinions as well as best practice among NGOs and faith-based institutions in Islamic countries, especially in the efforts of Islamic faith-based environmental conservation actions. These activities can include workshops or seminars involving all NGOs or academics working in the Islamic world, particularly faith based NGOs or Islamic faith-based organizations / institutions that are engaged in efforts to the environmental conservation or the SDGs. Exchange of knowledge and best practice will be very important in considering the appropriateness of environmental action in countries that have similarities.

## 3. Interfaith dialogue (Muslim perspective and potential common links)

Interfaith dialogue that addresses environmental challenges is a very good tool to combine efforts in the society as environmental matters are a shared challenge, which does not look at faith, ethnicity, and nation. Therefore, interfaith dialogue can be a means to foster a spirit of togetherness and tolerance, especially in looking at the common future. Focus should be on interfaith dialogue in Muslim countries through exploring current topics and lessons learnt from successful practices of environmental management.

## 4. Guidelines for the activation of faith-based joint action

The idea of publishing a guidebook that showcases the importance of joint action in this field and ways to improve it is one of the methods of unifying efforts and working mechanisms. This can be done through setting forth the values and criteria necessary to lay the basis for moderate faith-based action, directing the efforts at the level of countries on the basis of instructions inspired from these guidelines. It is also important to ensure that the implemented activities constitute a connected environmental action based on faith or local culture and contribute to the activities that go hand in hand with national and international objectives. Guidelines can be designed drawing on learned lessons and interested institutions such as ISESCO can be encouraged to publish and disseminate them.

## 5. Cooperation on capacity building and exchange of best practices

The *ulama*, scientists, intellectuals, and environmental activists need to collaborate to unite synergy and resources, to cooperate together, to issue the best methods and approaches to capacity building. The dialogue can be initiated among faith-based institutions in order to share experiences and best practices to find a suitable model of action that can be adopted by those who are interested to implement it in their country.

Afterwards, an annual action programme for capacity-building at the grassroots level can be developed to enhance the community's capacity with new knowledge, shared learning, and new enlightenment in looking at nature according to Islamic, cultural perspectives to achieve sustainable development.

## 6. Islamic network for environmental action and sustainable development

Islamic countries need to play an active role in environmental actions, which at the end will help many people to develop their understanding of the environment and care for it.

It is also necessary to activate networks both among Muslims themselves and with other religions. Environmental action can be explored from the wisdom of local culture that may be abandoned because it is considered inconsistent with the times, or abandoned because of modern regulations that no longer provide space for that wisdom.

The recommendations of the conference will ensure the examination of the document on the establishment of the Network

The operational plans of this strategy will elaborate the methodological and procedural aspects of each project or proposal within the framework of cooperation between institutions and field actors in Member States and elsewhere.

## CONCLUSION

This study explored the links between religion, culture, environment and sustainable development and ways of formulating a strategy to activate its impact in the reality of the Islamic world. The study sought to clarify the possibility that religion and culture can contribute to the protection and preservation of the environment and achieve sustainable development, based on the firm conviction that religion and culture play a fundamental role in shaping societies not only by their direct impact on human behavior, but also by their influence on formal and informal norms, standards and values and public discourses.

Furthermore, the study illustrated how the Qur'an influenced the hearts and minds of its followers since the revelation and enriched the perception of its reader about themselves and the universe. It thus constituted a clear lens that enabled one to take a new and clearer view of nature and to interact functionally, cautiously and responsibly with it.

From a Qur'anic perspective, man, as the successor to Allah on Earth, has been entrusted with the environment. Humans, however, are not masters of the Earth and the world; they cannot act indiscriminately on anything at their disposal, because man is responsible and accountable for his actions on the face of the earth.

The environmental dimensions of Agenda 2030 were adopted, and the possibility of activating institutions with a religious dimension in the Islamic world was considered, so that Member States could develop strong, inclusive, green and sustainable economies based participation and cooperation, and alternative measures and incentives for growth and prosperity. These dimensions can play a prominent role in education on more sustainable lifestyles and behaviors for sustainable consumption and production.

Thus, Member States can improve the performance of their sectoral strategies in the conservation of natural resources, the elimination of multidimensional poverty, and related challenges such as the rights of women, youth and minorities and the global right to access basic services; and address issues of discrimination, social disparities, migration, violence and others related to the 2030 goals. Members can develop innovative solutions based on local nature, promote respect for traditional knowledge, cultural diversity, environmental management practice and duty of care, build ethics of global and local citizenship, promote governance, tolerance, and build communities based on security, inclusion and peace, as called for by UNEP in 2016.

This strategy can define operational plans in each area, type or group of institutions of a religious nature, first and foremost the establishment of the Islamic Network for Joint Environmental Action based on Religious Practices.

In conclusion, we would like to say that this strategy aims at the field answer to the big question: What is the use of scientific research, legal theorization and institutional building, if the human in charge of the field application turns a blind eye to scientific facts, legal sanctions and civil obligations, especially in the absence or weakness of moral, cultural and religious imperatives, lack patriotism and sense of national belonging nation and human brotherhood.

The triangle of technology, legislation and education is the main framework for identifying the components of the environment through science, formulating its legal and institutional needs through legislation, and respecting the behavior of environmental citizenship

through both religious and civic education. We feel that the educational identity of the human species is united today under the umbrella of the common environmental future, in order to achieve the desired sustainable development and serve the present and future generations, in the light of the civilizational cross-pollination between people of different religions, cultures and environmental conditions determining the required ecological transformation.

**“Then We made you successors in the land after them so that We may observe how you will do.”** (*Sourate Yunus, 14*)

