

Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change

18th August 2015, signed in Istanbul, Turkey at the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium.

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In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate

PREAMBLE

- God – Whom we know as Allah – has created the universe in all its diversity, richness and vitality: the stars, the sun and moon, the earth and all its communities of living beings. All these reflect and manifest the boundless glory and mercy of their Creator. All created beings by nature serve and glorify their Maker, all bow to their Lord's will. We human beings are created to serve the Lord of all beings, to work the greatest good we can for all the species, individuals, and generations of God's creatures.
- Our planet has existed for billions of years and climate change in itself is not new. The earth's climate has gone through phases wet and dry, cold and warm, in response to many natural factors. Most of these changes have been gradual, so that the forms and communities of life have adjusted accordingly. There have been catastrophic climate changes that brought about mass extinctions, but over time, life adjusted even to these impacts, flowering anew in the emergence of balanced ecosystems such as those we treasure today. Climate change in the past was also instrumental in laying down immense stores of fossil fuels from which we derive benefits today. Ironically, our unwise and short-sighted use of these resources is now resulting in the destruction of the very conditions that have made our life on earth possible.
- The pace of Global climate change today is of a different order of magnitude from the gradual changes that previously occurred throughout the most recent era, the Cenozoic. Moreover, it is human-induced: we have now become a force dominating nature. The epoch in which we live has increasingly been described in

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geological terms as the Anthropocene, or “Age of Humans”. Our species, though selected to be a caretaker or steward (*khalifah*) on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it that we are in danger ending life as we know it on our planet. This current rate of climate change cannot be sustained, and the earth’s fine equilibrium (*mīzān*) may soon be lost. As we humans are woven into the fabric of the natural world, its gifts are for us to savour. But the same fossil fuels that helped us achieve most of the prosperity we see today are the main cause of climate change. Excessive pollution from fossil fuels threatens to destroy the gifts bestowed on us by God, whom we know as Allah – gifts such as a functioning climate, healthy air to breathe, regular seasons, and living oceans. But our attitude to these gifts has been short-sighted, and we have abused them. What will future generations say of us, who leave them a degraded planet as our legacy? How will we face our Lord and Creator?

- We note that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNEP, 2005) and backed by over 1300 scientists from 95 countries, found that “overall, people have made greater changes to ecosystems in the last half of the 20th century than at any time in human history... these changes have enhanced human well-being, but have been accompanied by ever increasing degradation (of our environment).”

“Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of the earth that the ability of the planet’s ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted.”

- Nearly ten years later, and in spite of the numerous conferences that have taken place to try to agree on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, the overall state of the Earth has steadily deteriorated. A study by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) comprising representatives from over 100 nations published in March 2014 gave five reasons for concern. In summary, they are:

- Ecosystems and human cultures are already at risk from climate change;
- Risks resulting from climate change caused by extreme events such as heat waves, extreme precipitation and coastal flooding are on the rise;

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- These risks are unevenly distributed, and are generally greater for the poor and disadvantaged communities of every country, at all levels of development;
- Foreseeable impacts will affect adversely Earth's biodiversity, the goods and services provided by our ecosystems, and our overall global economy;
- The Earth's core physical systems themselves are at risk of abrupt and irreversible changes.

We are driven to conclude from these warnings that there are serious flaws in the way we have used natural resources – the sources of life on Earth. An urgent and radical reappraisal is called for. Humankind cannot afford the slow progress we have seen in all the COP (Conference of Parties – climate change negotiations) processes since the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was published in 2005, or the present deadlock.

- In the brief period since the Industrial Revolution, humans have consumed much of the non-renewable resources which have taken the earth 250 million years to produce – all in the name of economic development and human progress. We note with alarm the combined impacts of rising per capita consumption combined with the rising human population. We also note with alarm the multi-national scramble now taking place for more fossil fuel deposits under the dissolving ice caps in the arctic regions. We are accelerating our own destruction through these processes.
- Leading climate scientists now believe that a rise of two degrees centigrade in global temperature, which is considered to be the “tipping point”, is now very unlikely to be avoided if we continue with business-as-usual; other leading climate scientists consider 1.5 degrees centigrade to be a more likely “tipping point”. This is the point considered to be the threshold for catastrophic climate change, which will expose yet more millions of people and countless other creatures to drought, hunger and flooding. The brunt of this will continue to be borne by the poor, as the Earth experiences a drastic increase in levels of carbon in the atmosphere brought on in the period since the onset of the industrial revolution.

1.8 It is alarming that in spite of all the warnings and predictions, the successor to the Kyoto Protocol which should have been in place by 2012, has been delayed. It is essential that all countries, especially the more developed nations, increase their efforts and adopt the pro-active approach needed to halt and hopefully eventually reverse the damage being wrought.

WE AFFIRM

- We affirm that Allah is the Lord and Sustainer (*Rabb*) of all beings

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

Praise be to Allah, Lord and Sustainer of all beings

Qur'an 1: 1

He is the One Creator – He is *al-Khāliq*

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ

He is Allah – the Creator, the Maker, the Giver of Form

Qur'an 59: 24

الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ

He Who has perfected every thing He has created

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Qur'an 32: 7

Nothing that He creates is without value: each thing is created *bi 'l-haqq*, in truth and for right.

لَا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِ

And We did not create the heavens and earth and that between them in play. We have not created them but in truth

Qur'an 44: 38

- We affirm that He encompasses all of His creation – He is *al-Muhīt*

وَلِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطًا

All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah.

Allah encompasses all things

Qur'an 4: 125

- We affirm that –
- God created the Earth in perfect equilibrium (*mīzān*);
- By His immense mercy we have been given fertile land, fresh air, clean water and all the good things on Earth that makes our lives here viable and delightful;

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- The Earth functions in natural seasonal rhythms and cycles: a climate in which living beings – including humans – thrive;
- The present climate change catastrophe is a result of the human disruption of this balance –

وَالسَّمَاءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيزَانَ

أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ

يُمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ وَآفِ

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ

He raised the heaven and established the balance

So that you would not transgress the balance.

Give just weight – do not skimp in the balance.

He laid out the earth for all living creatures.

Qur'an 55: 7-10

- We affirm the natural state (*fitrah*) of God's creation –

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا

الْقَيِّمِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ

So set your face firmly towards the (natural) Way

As a pure, natural believer

Allah's natural pattern on which He made mankind

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There is no changing Allah's creation.

That is the true (natural) Way

But most people do not know it.

Quran 30: 30

2.5 We recognize the corruption (*fasād*) that humans have caused on the Earth due to our relentless pursuit of economic growth and consumption. Its consequences have been –

- Global climate change, which is our present concern, in addition to:
- Contamination and befoulment of the atmosphere, land, inland water systems, and seas;
- Soil erosion, deforestation and desertification;
- Damage to human health, including a host of modern-day diseases.

رُجِعُونَ ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

Corruption has appeared on land and sea

Because of what people's own hands have wrought,

So that they may taste something of what they have done;

So that hopefully they will turn back.

Qur'an 30: 41

- We recognize that we are but a miniscule 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 also recognize that –

- We are but one of the multitude of living beings with whom we share the Earth;
- We have no right to oppress the rest of creation or cause it harm;
- Intelligence and conscience behoove us, as our faith commands, to treat all things with care and awe (*taqwa*) of their Creator, compassion (*rahmah*) and utmost good (*ihsan*).

أَمْثَالُكُمْ وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ

There is no animal on the earth, or any bird that wings its flight, but is a community like you.

Qur'an 6: 38

لَخُلُقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ خَلْقِ النَّاسِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

The creation of the heavens and the earth

Is far greater than the creation of mankind,

But most of mankind do not know it

Qur'an 40: 57

- We recognize that we are accountable for all our actions –

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ

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شَرًّا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ

Then he who has done an atom's weight of good, shall see it;

and he who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.

Qur'an 99:6-8

2.8 In view of these considerations we affirm that our responsibility as Muslims is to act according to the example of the Prophet Muhammad (God's peace and blessings be upon him) who –

- Declared and protected the rights of all living beings, outlawed the custom of burying infant girls alive, prohibited killing living beings for sport, guided his companions to conserve water even in washing for prayer, forbade the felling of trees in the desert, ordered a man who had taken some nestlings from their nest to return them to their mother, and when he came upon a man who had lit a fire on an anthill, commanded, "Put it out, put it out!";
- Established 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.
- Lived a frugal life, free of excess, waste, and ostentation;
- Renewed and recycled his meagre possessions by repairing or giving them away;
- Ate simple, healthy food, which only occasionally included meat;
- Took delight in the created world; and
- Was, in the words of the Qur'an, "a mercy to all beings."

WE CALL

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3.1 We call upon the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Kyoto Protocol taking place in Paris this December, 2015 to bring their discussions to an equitable and binding conclusion, bearing in mind –

- The scientific consensus on climate change, which is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate systems;
- The need to set clear targets and monitoring systems;
- The dire consequences to planet earth if we do not do so;
- The enormous responsibility the COP shoulders on behalf of the rest of humanity, including leading the rest of us to a new way of relating to God's Earth.

3.2 We particularly call on the well-off nations and oil-producing states to –

- Lead the way in phasing out their greenhouse gas emissions as early as possible and no later than the middle of the century;
- Provide generous financial and technical support to the less well-off to achieve a phase-out of greenhouse gases as early as possible;
- Recognize the moral obligation to reduce consumption so that the poor may benefit from what is left of the earth's non-renewable resources;
- Stay within the '2 degree' limit, or, preferably, within the '1.5 degree' limit, bearing in mind that two-thirds of the earth's proven fossil fuel reserves remain in the ground;
- Re-focus their concerns from unethical profit from the environment, to that of preserving it and elevating the condition of the world's poor.
- Invest in the creation of a green economy.

3.3 We call on the people of all nations and their leaders to –

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- Aim to phase out greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible in order to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere;
- Commit themselves to 100 % renewable energy and/or a zero emissions strategy as early as possible, to mitigate the environmental impact of their activities;
- Invest in decentralized renewable energy, which is the best way to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development;
- Realize that to chase after unlimited economic growth in a planet that is finite and already overloaded is not viable. Growth must be pursued wisely and in moderation; placing a priority on increasing the resilience of all, and especially the most vulnerable, to the climate change impacts already underway and expected to continue for many years to come.
- Set in motion a fresh model of wellbeing, based on an alternative to the current financial model which depletes resources, degrades the environment, and deepens inequality.
- Prioritise adaptation efforts with appropriate support to the vulnerable countries with the least capacity to adapt. And to vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, women and children.

3.4 We call upon corporations, finance, and the business sector to –

- Shoulder the consequences of their profit-making activities, and take a visibly more active role in reducing their carbon footprint and other forms of impact upon the natural environment;
- In order to mitigate the environmental impact of their activities, commit themselves to 100 % renewable energy and/or a zero emissions strategy as early as possible and shift investments into renewable energy;
- Change from the current business model which is based on an unsustainable escalating economy, and to adopt a circular economy that is wholly sustainable;
- Pay more heed to social and ecological responsibilities, particularly to the extent that they extract and utilize scarce resources;
- Assist in the divestment from the fossil fuel driven economy and the scaling up of renewable energy and other ecological alternatives.

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3.5 We call on all groups to join us in collaboration, co-operation and friendly competition in this endeavour and we welcome the significant contributions taken by other faiths, as we can all be winners in this race

وَلَكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ

He (God) wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good deeds.

Qur'an 5: 48

If we each offer the best of our respective traditions, we may yet see a way through our difficulties.

3.6 Finally, we call on all Muslims wherever they may be –

Heads of state

Political leaders

Business community

UNFCCC delegates

Religious leaders and scholars

Mosque congregations

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Islamic endowments (awqaf)

Educators and educational institutions

Community leaders

Civil society activists

Non-governmental organisations

Communications and media

طُولاً وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ

Do not strut arrogantly on the earth.

You will never split the earth apart

nor will you ever rival the mountains' stature.

Qur'an 17: 37

We bear in mind the words of our Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

The world is sweet and verdant, and verily Allah has made you stewards in it, and He sees how you acquit yourselves

Hadīth related by Muslim from Abu Sa'īd Al-Khudrī)