

*International Islamic*  
**Climate Change**  
*Symposium*

17-18 August 2015  
**Istanbul, Turkey**

**Summary**

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## INTRODUCTION:

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### ***As salamu alaykum***

Peace be upon you all

We are the first generation that could end poverty, the last capable of avoiding the worst impacts of climate change. We must all play our part, and with 1.6 billion Muslims in the world today, a clearly defined Islamic imperative to tackle the defining issue of our era has vast potential to help achieve the fundamental shift needed for a sustainable world. The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, adopted in August 2015, represents broad unity amongst Muslim leaders and presents a compelling call for humanity to meet its moral and spiritual obligations as stewards of the Earth.

### **An expert team for a ground-breaking Declaration**

From Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, a team of top global experts in the study of Islam and the environment came together to prepare and consult on the world's first unified Declaration on Climate Change. Between them, they have authored many books and hundreds of articles and have also received prestigious awards and recognitions. The team included:

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**Fazlun Khalid:** recognised as one of fifteen leading eco theologians in the world and a recipient of the Muslim News Awards for Excellence in Engineering, Science and Technology in 2004.

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**Professor Ibrahim Ozdemir:** Professor of Philosophy, Ecology and Religion at Ankara University, Turkey, and author of *The Ethical Dimension of Human Attitude Towards Nature*.

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**Dr Fachruddin Mangunjaya:** Vice-Chairman of the Centre for Islamic Studies at the National University in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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**Professor Mohammed Yasin Dutton:** Associate Professor in Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

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**Othman Llewellyn:** Environmental Planner at Saudi Wildlife Authority and a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's World Commission on Protected Areas and World Commission on Environmental Law.

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**Professor Azizan Baharuddin:** Deputy Director General of the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, a member of UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee, chair of the Malaysian Bioethics Council, and Chair of the National Committee of Interfaith.

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**Dr Abdelmajid Tribak:** Head of Environment at ISESCO, Morocco and winner of the Mohamed VI Prize for Islamic Thought and Studies for his book on Islam and Environment (2007).

A wide group of experts and Islamic scholars, as well as respected Islamic leaders worldwide, thought leaders from various regions, sects, traditions of the Islamic community and other faith groups, were consulted as part of the drafting process.



*Group photograph, ICCS*

## Shared knowledge and commitment to meaningful change

The challenging Declaration was formally adopted at a Symposium held on 17-18 August. The first of its kind, the international event brought together 80 carefully selected representatives of academics, religious authorities, inter-governmental organisations, civil society, practitioners and mobilisers across a broad cross section of Muslim communities.

The Istanbul Symposium was co-organised by Islamic Relief Worldwide – the world’s largest Muslim international humanitarian and development non-governmental organisation – alongside the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES), which is the foremost global think-tank on study and action on eco-Islam and GreenFaith – the leading interfaith network on the environment. It was also supported by the largest global network of civil society groups working on climate change, Climate Action Network (CAN). It was delivered in collaboration with the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the inter-governmental body comprising 57 Muslim member states, and two of its specialised bodies: the Islamic Scientific, Educational, Social & Cultural Organisation (ISESCO) and the body in charge of Islamic jurisprudence, the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IIFA).



Grand Muftis – faith leaders at the level of the highest Muslim authorities – from Uganda, Lebanon, Bosnia & Herzegovina, were represented at the Symposium, as were the presidents of Majlis Ulama Indonesia and the Islamic Society of North America. Leading scholars from five universities also took part, as well as grassroots activists and implementers of field projects. Directors from UN bodies with a direct remit for climate change – United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Climate Change Support Team (CCST) in the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General – also joined other participants in sharing knowledge and ideas, and making commitments responding to demands set out in the Declaration. In addition, representatives of Catholic, Lutheran, Hindu and Jewish faith traditions delivered welcome messages of solidarity.

## Consensus on a springboard for action

The Declaration represents broad unity within the Islamic community on the moral and spiritual imperative to respond boldly to climate change. It will serve as a springboard for the mobilisation of Muslims ahead of COP21 of the UNFCCC, a pivotal conference which brings together all nations to form a transformative new legal agreement on climate change – and to adopt a series of key decisions with immediate effect. The Declaration is also intended to focus local community action within Muslim communities, including renewable energy and community preparedness for climate events.

# ISLAMIC DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

*In the name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate*

## Preamble

1.1. 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.

1.2. 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.

1.3. 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 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 of 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?

1.4. We note that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (UNEP, 2005) 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."*

1.5. 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;
- 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.

1.6. In the brief period since the Industrial Revolution, humans have consumed much of the non-renewable resources which has 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.

1.7. 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

2.1. 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 everything He has created*  
**Qur'an 32: 7**

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

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَاعِبِينَ مَا خَلَقْنَاهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
*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**

2.2. 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**

2.3. 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 make our lives here viable and delightful;
- 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  
وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ  
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 the balance.  
He laid out the Earth for all living creatures.*

**Qur'an 55: 7-10**

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

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا  
لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ  
*So set your face firmly towards the (natural) Way  
As a pure, natural believer  
Allah's natural pattern on which He made mankind  
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;
- Destruction, degradation, and fragmentation of the habitats of the Earth's communities of life, with devastation of some of the most biologically diverse and productive ecosystems such as rainforests, freshwater wetlands, and coral reefs;
- Impairment of ecosystem benefits and services;
- Introduction of invasive alien species and genetically modified organisms;
- Damage to human health, including a host of modern-day diseases.

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي  
النَّاسِ لِيذِيقَهُمْ 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**

2.6. We recognize that 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 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*).

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ أُمَّتُكُمْ  
*There is no animal on the Earth, or any bird that wings its flight, but is a community like you.*

**Qur'an 6: 38**

لَخَلْقُ 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**

2.7. We recognize that we are accountable for all our actions -

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ  
وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ

*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

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 –

- 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.

**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

وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَأَسْتَبِقُوا 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
- Islamic endowments (awqaf)
- Educators and educational institutions
- Community leaders
- Civil society activists
- Non-governmental organisations
- Communications and media

to tackle habits, mindsets, and the root causes of climate change, environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity in their particular spheres of influence, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and bring about a resolution to the challenges that now face us. Allah says in the Qur'an -

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّكَ لَأَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا  
*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)**







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