

Commitments by secular organizations to work with the faiths

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Introduction

The major new commitments by the faiths involve every one of those traditions taking major new steps in their efforts to protect the environment. To do this they need secular partners who can bring specialist knowledge on topics as diverse as forests, farming, energy and economics to assist the faiths over the coming years.

At Windsor, 18 secular organizations from around the world made commitments to partner with the faiths. This is the first time that so many environmental organisations have publicly committed themselves to take partnering with the faiths seriously.

ARC and UNDP look forward to working with the secular commitments as well as the faith commitments in the years to come.

The British Council



The British Council, the UK's international body for cultural relations, has identified climate change as the biggest challenge currently facing humankind. It is using its extensive international networks to help increase understanding of climate change issues; mobilise public pressure for progress on international agreements; and establish relationships which lead to action.

At the Windsor Celebration in November 2009, David Viner, the head of its climate change programme, pledged the British Council's support in working with religious programmes on the environment and climate change throughout its 165+ offices in more than 100 countries worldwide.

For more information, visit www.britishcouncil.org.

The Blue Ocean Institute



From Arctic Alaskan fishing villages to Zanzibar's shores, the US-based Blue Ocean Institute studies how everything humans do – both on land and at sea – affects the waters, wildlife and people of our world. But gloomy environmental warnings and predictions don't move people to make changes that can help our shared ocean.

That's why MacArthur Prize-winning scientist/author Dr. Carl Safina and Mercédès Lee, an environmental writer and former board member of the Marine Stewardship Council, created Blue Ocean Institute in 2003 as a voice of hope, guidance, and encouragement.

Since 2007, it has also become a unique meeting place between people of faith and people of science. Ken Wilson, senior pastor of Vineyard Church Ann Arbor, and Carl host presentations, workshops and discussions to help bridge the cultural divide between secular environmental scientists and evangelical pastors in what they call 'The Friendship Collaborative'.

For more information, visit www.blueocean.org.

CAFOD



CAFOD is the international development agency of the Catholic Church. As well as having developed its own Seven Year Action Plan on climate change, aimed at reducing its own carbon footprint, it has also produced extensive education resources on climate change for use in schools, including leadership initiatives on global sustainability for 16-18-year-olds.

CAFOD is also trying to ensure it is better prepared for the consequences of climate change. It has an unusual partnership with the University of London and the University of Liverpool in which the universities' researchers are helping refine the predictions for a particular part of the world so that CAFOD can be more focussed on the needs of that area. Climate change won't affect everyone

everywhere in the same way so the most efficient way to plan for the future is to work on a local model, says CAFOD.

For more information, visit www.cafod.org.uk.



The Carbon Trust

The Carbon Trust's mission is to accelerate the move to a low carbon economy, by working with organisations to reduce carbon emissions now and develop commercial low carbon technologies for the future. At Windsor it offered its support to faith communities looking to reduce their carbon emissions, saying:

"Carbon Trust offers a range of support to help organisations of all sizes to reduce their carbon emissions. The Carbon Trust is funded by Government and provides an advisory service that is appropriate to the individual needs of, and available to all organisations in the UK.

"Its primary objective is to identify, and assist those organisations in the implementation of, carbon emissions savings. Although UK-based it has worked with the Church of England and is happy to pass on their experience on bringing low carbon ideas to other communities."

For more information, visit www.carbontrust.co.uk.



Compassion in World Farming

The animal welfare charity Compassion in World Farming was founded more than 40 years ago in 1967 by a British dairy farmer who was horrified by the development of modern, intensive factory farming. Today it campaigns peacefully to end all cruel factory farming practices, and it has pledged to work with faith communities on improving animal welfare.

It specifically works on farm animal welfare; up to 60 billion animals are farmed for food worldwide every year, most of them reared intensively in systems that seriously impact their welfare. As well as working to improve the welfare of farmed animals through changing legislation, Compassion in World Farming aims to educate consumers on how their food choices can bring about change.

It quotes from two spiritual leaders on its website: Mahatma Gandhi - "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated"; and the Dalai Lama - "The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of wellbeing becomes."

For more information, visit www.ciwf.org.uk.

Conservation International

Conservation International helps communities to protect habitats and species around the world – from tropical forests, lush grasslands and rivers to wetlands, abundant lakes and the sea - through its field offices in more than 30 countries, more than 1,000 partner organisations, and thousands of projects worldwide.

It argues that only through properly valuing the essential services these ecosystems provide can we create a sustainable development path that will benefit all people for generations to come, and it believes the planet's ecological health is inextricably linked to human well-being.

It has a strong record in working with science, partner organisations and local people, including faith communities. For example it is helping monasteries in the Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province, China, protect the flora and fauna of the region's sacred mountains. And in the Peruvian Andes, it is working with local people to reforest the sacred valley of the Incas, whose Apu Pachatusan glacier is shrinking. It has pledged its support in working further with faith communities on environmental projects.

For more information, visit www.conservation.org.



The Fairtrade Foundation

Fairtrade is now a well recognised logo on many products, and growing. The concept of fair trade is about better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.

The Fairtrade Foundation is part of an international network of fair trade labelling organisations whose vision is for justice and sustainable development to be placed at the heart of international trade structures and practices so that everyone, through their work, can maintain a decent and dignified livelihood and develop their full potential. By facilitating trading partnerships based on equity and transparency, Fairtrade contributes to sustainable development for marginalised producers, workers and their communities.

Many religious groups are already signed up to Fair Trade and it is a partnership that is growing; ethical purchasing, for example, is an area many faith communities have expressed an interest in finding out about. Fair Trade would be delighted to advise and help any religious organisation that wants to redress the balance of injustice in trading of foodstuffs.

For more information, visit www.fairtrade.org.uk.



The Forest Stewardship Council

The Forest Stewardship Council promotes sustainable and environmentally friendly forestry management and runs a labeling scheme to enable consumers to

make ethical purchasing decisions. It was established in 1993 out of concerns about global deforestation.

In many forests around the world, logging still contributes to habitat destruction, water pollution, displacement of indigenous peoples, and violence against people who work in the forest and the wildlife that dwells there. Many consumers of wood and paper, and many forest products companies, believe that the link between logging and these negative impacts can be broken, and that forests can be managed and protected at the same time.

The Forest Stewardship Council certification is one way to improve the practice of forestry and the FSC is keen to partner with any religious groups on sustainable forestry projects. The world's religions own approximately five per cent of the world's forests, so this is a vitally important link to be made. In addition, 75 million Bibles and 15 million Qur'ans are printed each year.

For more information, visit www.fsc.org.

LEAD



LEAD is the largest international not-for-profit organisation focused on leadership and sustainable development. Founded in 1991, its mission is to inspire leadership and change towards a sustainable world and it has 13 international programme offices and a global, cross-sector network of more than 2,000 fellows in more than 90 countries.

LEAD sees climate change as part of a larger leadership challenge which seeks to align values, behaviours and social systems both with each other and the natural world. LEAD has always worked with different social sectors and cultures, but is new to working with faith-based organisations. However, it fundamentally recognises the importance of faith in realising the social change that is needed, not least because it can draw on values implicit in sustainability such as equity, balance and spiritual growth.

LEAD believes its experience in leadership development and sustainability can support faith-based organisations and networks in strengthening their response to climate change. It intends to pilot this approach by building on a community based adaptation project it is currently implementing in Malawi, where it will run a workshop for religious leaders to strengthen their understanding of climate change and help them develop action plans to deal with its impacts.

For more information, visit www.lead.org.

The Marine Stewardship Council



The Marine Stewardship Council is the world's leading certification and eco-labelling programme for sustainable seafood. MSC's vision is of the world's oceans teeming with life, and seafood supplies safeguarded for this and future generations. To that end it works with fisheries, scientists, conservation groups and now – hopefully - religious communities around the globe to ensure sustainable fish stocks and a respect for the resources of the sea.

It says: "Our mission is to use our eco-label and fishery certification programme to contribute to the health of the world's oceans by recognising and rewarding sustainable fishing practices, influencing the choices people make when buying seafood, and working with our partners to transform the seafood market to a sustainable basis".

MSC is keen to work with faith communities on promoting sustainable fishing, please contact them. For more information, visit www.msc.org.

Plantlife International



PLANTLIFE

Plantlife International is a UK based charity working to save wild plants where they grow and the resources they provide as the foundation of the natural environment. It sees a key role for faith-based organisations in the conservation and development of medicinal plants.

Many people in large parts of Africa, Asia and elsewhere, collect locally growing plants for home medicines or to sell for income. These medicinal plants involve some 50,000-70,000 species (around 20 per cent of all plants) but because their conservation requires protecting their habitats, focussing on medicinal plants has the potential to conserve many other plants too.

Plantlife International believes faith-based organisations are well placed to take this work forward at community level, given their presence and their belief in people's duty of care towards the environment. It offers its experience and network of experts, free of charge, apart from expenses, to faiths and faith-based organisations, especially in East Africa and the Himalayas where it has developed a model for community-based conservation and development.

For more information, visit www.plantlife.org.uk.

The Soil Association



The Soil Association campaigns for planet-friendly food and farming in the UK and internationally, and runs the UK's leading organic food labelling certification scheme. It is keen to engage with faith groups because it believes they share a sense of the spiritual dimension of food.

This dimension, which lies at the heart of all faith communities, has been weakened by the industrialisation of agriculture in the last century but has always been recognised by the organic movement, which embodies the concepts of stewardship, sustainability and respect for Mother Nature. With 700,000 organic farmers managing more 30 million hectares of land worldwide, the Soil Association believes a collaboration between faith communities and the organic movement could be powerful.

It says: "Based on the understanding that the ecological crisis has a spiritual dimension, we believe that a partnership that harnesses the power of the faith communities and the movement for sustainable agriculture, with its existing global network of organic organisations, producers and individual citizens

committed to sustainable food production, could not only address the environmental crises but could also restore food to its rightful place in spiritual practice. We invite you to help us restore Faith in Food.”

For more information, visit www.soilassociation.org.

Wetlands International



Wetlands International is a global organisation that works to sustain and restore wetlands and their resources for people and biodiversity for future generations. Wetlands include river delta, lakes, peat swamps, lagoons, estuaries and reefs, and are vital areas for all kinds of plants and animals and, of course, are essential for us humans.

Wetlands International is an independent, not-for-profit, global organisation, supported by government and NGO membership from around the world. Based mostly in the developing world in over 100 countries, it has 20 regional, national or project offices in all continents and a head office in Ede, the Netherlands. It is involved in 100 projects worldwide and in all its work respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

As many religious groups are custodians of water, partnerships with organisation such as Wetlands International could be vital, and it extends an invitation to all religions to find out more.

For more information, visit www.wetlands.org.

Woodland Trust



The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. It has been working for nearly 40 years across the country. Its aim is to: enable the creation of more native woods and places rich in trees; protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future; inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees.

More information on the Woodland Trust's work with faiths will follow soon, but to read more about their general projects, see www.woodlandtrust.org.uk.

UNEP



Dr. Azza Karam, of the United Nations Family Planning Association, pledged to expand further the work the UNFPA is undertaking with faith-based NGOs throughout its 120 country offices and five regional offices.

For more information, visit www.unep.org.



UNDP

At the United Nations Millennium Summit, the world's leaders pledged to cut global poverty in half by 2015. The United Nations Development Programme is charged with helping make this happen. As the UN's global development network, the UNDP works in 166 countries, helping people build a better life and championing the poor and disadvantaged.

Climate change remains a key element in the UNDP's poverty reduction work; it says the poor, particularly in the least developed countries, are suffering the greatest impacts of climate change while doing the least to contribute to the problem – which makes the environmental crisis an ethical and justice issue.

In 2007 the UNDP and ARC entered a partnership designed to contribute to long-term solutions to climate change by raising awareness of the issue among faith communities and mobilising them to develop action plans on environment. The result of this work was the Windsor Celebration at which more than 30 practical long-term plans by traditions within nine of the world's major faiths were presented to HRH Prince Philip and Secretary-General HE Mr Ban Ki-moon in November 2009.

The UNDP is keen to further its work with faith communities.

For more information, visit www.undp.org.



The World Bank

The World Bank offers loans, advice and resources to more than 100 developing countries around the world. It helps governments reduce poverty by providing them with money and technical expertise they need for a wide range of projects – such as education, health and infrastructure.

The World Bank recognises that faith groups can represent a very powerful voice for environmental stewardship which is why it has supported pioneering work around the globe to link faith-based initiatives with environmental advocacy through its 'Faiths and Environment' Programme which began in 2000.

In East Asia, for example, projects in Cambodia, resulting in the formal establishment of the Association of Buddhism for the Environment, as well as the Sangha Network linking Buddhist organisations working on environmental projects in mainland South East Asia. It supported the Cambodian NGO Mlup Baitong which provided environmental education and training in pagodas, as well as a range of Benedictine communities in Latin America and in Africa, where Benedictine monasteries are the centre of local economic and spiritual life. It also funded the Katibunge Benedictine Monastery to run a project based on sustainable animal farming, land management and forestry.

For more information, visit www.worldbank.org.



World Land Trust

World Land Trust is an international conservation organisation that takes direct action to save rainforest and other wildlife habitats by providing funds for partner organisations, so that they can purchase land and establish permanent wildlife reserves.

Since its foundation in 1989, it has helped purchase and protect more than 400,000 acres of habitats rich in wildlife, in Asia, Central and South America and the UK. It also works Africa, India and the Far East. It has a policy of working with local partner organisations, and the Trust does not normally play a direct role in the ownership or the management of the land it conserves.

Current projects include increasing the size of the Reserva Ecological de Guapi Assu in the Atlantic rainforest of Brazil, one of the most important eco-regions in the world, and is working with Malaysian LEAP Conservancy to protect rainforest in Borneo to ensure continuous habitat for orang-utans and protect pygmy elephants, sun bears and other wildlife.

The World Land Trust would be very interested to know more about how it could work with religious organisations on the ground to save very special and endangered habitats.

For more information, visit www.worldlandtrust.org.



WWF

WWF is well known to us all – in fact, it is the best known large scale environmental organisation in the world. It protects habitats and species, and has always known of the power of faith groups – and is a great supporter of the work of ARC.

As its website says: “We team up with local non-profit agencies and other global NGOs. We form relationships with village elders, local councils and regional government offices. And in this day and age of globalisation, critically, we work with businesses who are willing to change.”

WWF’s mission is to stop the degradation of our planet's natural environment, and build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. As part of that mission, it regards mitigating climate change as one of its priorities, pointing out that climate change is already happening and affecting people, biodiversity and precious ecosystems, all over the world.

It is working to reduce humanity’s ecological footprint and it really wants to team up with religions in new ways building on their past experience.

For more information, visit www.panda.org.