

My name is Dr He Xiaoxin and I head the Alliance of Religions and Conservation programme with Daoists and Buddhists in China. I am honoured to have been invited to sign this Manifesto and to be asked to speak this evening.

I believe the Uppsala Manifesto is an important indication of the potential role faiths can play in reminding Government that they do not stand alone on the issues of climate change and the environment.

The second part of the Manifesto urges faiths to action. This is exactly what Confucius says we need to do. He said – “First practice what you want to preach and then preach what you practice”.

It is perhaps the most distinctive feature of the great faiths that they think and act long term. As one of the great Chinese epics says “Dynasties come and Dynasties go”. However Chinese Daoism has lasted until today and as the great Daoist teacher Lao Zi says “Dao goes on forever”.

This is the strength of faiths – their long term visions and ability to sustain commitments for centuries.

And it is this which has inspired the UN to work with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation to create a programme which picks up on so many of the ideas and hopes of the Manifesto. This new programme is called “7 Year Plan for Generational Change”. Because “8” is a more auspicious number in China the Daoists have just agreed their “8 Year Plan for Generational Change”.

We are asking each faith to not just look at its teachings but to assess its stakeholder role. The great faiths own 8% of the habitable surface of the planet. They are also the holders of the ethos – not ethics but ethos of our culture. The faiths are the memory palace of our world.

Let’s look at our assets – lands, investments, buildings, let’s explore how education networks, pastoral care, lifestyles, partnerships and the sense of hope and celebration can all be part of how every faith community can make long term commitments to help save nature – long after Copenhagen is a page of history.

As the Daoist sage Lao Zi says: “The journey of a thousand miles starts beneath your feet”. Perhaps we can say that the journey to Copenhagen and on beyond starts beneath our feet today in Uppsala.