



15th January 2022

ISLAM-BUDDHISM ECO DIALOGUE (IBED) CONFERENCE 2022
– A CONFERENCE ON THE APPLICATION OF RELIGION AND SCIENCE TO ECOLOGY & SUSTAINABILITY:
PERSPECTIVES FROM ISLAM AND BUDDHISM on January 15-16, 2022

INAUGURAL OPENING SPEECH BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA,
VENERABLE GESHE DORJI DAMDUL

Dear brothers and sisters,

This is to express my heartfelt thanks to the organizers of the **International Conference on the Application of Religion and Science to Ecology and sustainability: Perspectives from Islam and Buddhism** for hosting this historic event in bringing Muslim and Buddhist brothers and sisters from all over the world on the same stage in the spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood; that too towards a common effort to create broader awareness and thus take care of the ecology for the good of today's and the future generations.

Just as we the people of the world gathered here today were all anticipating to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama with us for this conference, His Holiness also considers this dialogue as extremely important event for several reasons: bringing harmony between the human beings and the environment, which is only possible through collective efforts which in turn is feasible only through developing harmony among the human beings, and among the different religions.

Why ecology is so important? From how the people and countries actively destroy the environment in all sorts of forms like heavy deforestation and Amazon rain forest fires, nuclear proliferation and so forth, people are given the impression that ecology is the least important of all. This is all our naivety.

Covid-19, reminded us that our wellbeing is the most important thing. The money and the wealth for which we are destroying the environment is not the end, but not to be forgotten that they are at the most just the means to the end.

The end is the wellbeing of the citizens of the world as visibly taught to us by Covid-19. The whole world has to remain locked down, nations have to loose and sacrifice billions of dollars, sacrifice the education of their children, in schools, Colleges and Universities. This is well highlighted in the 17 SDG enumerated by UNO more precisely in the first three points 1) No Poverty 2) No Hunger 3) Good Health and Well-Being.

From the space, if you look at the various celestial objects, there is only one planet which starkly stands out as the most beautiful one, exuding blue hues. It is the Planet Earth, our home. If we



lose this, the whole inhabitants will die, and there is no other planet for us to escape to. This is well reflected in the book *Our Only Home*, by HH the Dalai Lama, when He said,

"Yesterday, our beautiful blue planet was still a natural paradise in many areas. Today it is already withered in many places and tomorrow it will be uninhabitable in many regions, if we just carry on as before."

He also said, in the foreword to the book *"Ecological Responsibility, A Dialogue with Buddhism"* published by Tibet House, Delhi 1997,

"Resolving the environmental crisis is not just a question of ethics but a question of our own survival. The natural environment is very important not only for those of us alive now but also for future generations. If we exploit it in extreme ways even though we may get money or other benefits from it now, in the long run we ourselves and future generations will suffer."

The Buddha exhorted, "All phenomena of pleasant and unpleasant nature arise from their respective causes". It is pertinent to study and identify the causes of the ecological crises.

Some of the causes of man-made environmental degradations are Ozone depletion, excessive deforestation, Green House effect, water pollution, air pollution, nuclear waste dumping, excessive meat consumption and so forth. The immediate cause of these is our attempt to feed our endless greed. This greed is because of ignorance which fails to see the interdependent nature of the fragile planet earth as the habitat and the human beings and the animals as inhabitants.

Inhabitants will perish when the world as the habitat perishes. Let us look at how Tsunami washes away everything, your house, your children, your family, your money, including your bank, like small match boxes being washed away by a flood. In the Buddhist texts, we the beings are often times referred to as child-like. It is the child who throws stones to the glass house one takes shelter in, and to regret at the end over the loss of the shelter when one suffers from cold, rain and so forth.

Dr. Franz Alt said in the book *Our Only Home, A Climate Appeal to the World* jointly written with His Holiness.

"Every day we are emitting globally about 150 million tons of CO₂, every day we are killing off about 150 animal and plant species, we are losing daily 50,000 tons of fertile soil, and 'deserts grow by about 80,000 hectares every day. Our greed for meat destroys rain forests. In 2019, hundreds of millions of Africans lived through the most terrible drought within living memory and are fearful of the next famine. A whole subcontinent is crying for water:"

His Holiness in his address on June 7, 1992 to the Parliamentary Earth Summit (Global Forum) of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNICED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.



“This blue planet of ours is a delightful habitat. Its life is our life; its future our future. Indeed the earth acts like a mother to us all. Like children, we are dependent on her. In the face of such global problems as the green house effect and depletion of the ozone layer, individual organizations and single nations are helpless. Unless we all work together, no solution can be found. Our mother earth is teaching us a lesson in universal responsibility.”

Where lies the solution?

Looking at the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as highlighted by UNO, 6) Clean Water and Sanitation 7) Affordable and Clean Energy 11) Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12) Responsible Consumption and Production 13) Climate Action 14) Life Below Water 15) Life On Land

We need collective efforts. On the International level, leaders play a great role. For example handling Covid is not what one nation can do. I was so impressed to hear Mr. Blinkin, the Secretary of State, of US during the meeting we had on his first day of the visit to India 2021, saying that no one nation can do anything to curb this virus. It should be a collective effort of all the countries.

As individual citizens also, we need to take responsibility in this effort. It was very inspiring to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama emphasizing a lot on preservation of ecology during his public teaching in Sarnath on 29th December 1990, the place where the Buddha gave His first sermon. There HH the Dalai Lama distributed lots of fruit-bearing tree seeds, which He bought from the monetary part of his Noble Peace Prize of 1989, thus inspiring all his followers and admirers to embrace to replenish the environment with love and care.

HH the Dalai Lama said: “Since I too have a responsibility in this matter, (that is to work for the protection of the environment and to see that the present and future generations of mankind can make use of refreshing shade and the fruits of trees). I bought these seeds of fruit bearing trees with part of my Noble Peace Prize money to be distributed now, to people representing different regions (all the continents of the world are represented here) during this Kalachakra gathering. These seeds have been kept near the Kalachakra Mandala for purification and blessings. Since these include seeds of apricot, walnut, papaya, guava, etc... suitable for planting under varying geographical conditions, experts in respective places should be consulted on their planting and care and thus, you all should see that my sincere aspiration is fulfilled.”

One distinctive, yet very noble mind set, I noticed in the people who love and stand for the environment is that they will never engage in killing another human brother or sister. They care for life. If this altruistic compassion which drives them to become a noble being as opposed to selfish persons can be taught to the world leaders and the common people alike, the world is going to be a very different place, a place of worship by the present and the future generations.

How can we teach this altruistic heart to the people?



It always intrigues me to see that what HH the Dalai Lama says resonates with that of what Einstein thought when the latter said, “A human being is a part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feeling as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty.”

Every time HH gives public addresses within or outside India, experts come with the same question, “Where are we, as the world, going wrong that world crises keep increasing despite the great advancement in the modern education. HH, without second thought responds, “the wellbeing of the world is determined by the development of both the brain and heart. Unfortunately, the modern education is designed to develop only the brain and not the heart. Now is the high time that we introduce programs for heart development as part of modern education system.”

It has been one of the greatest efforts of HH the Dalai Lama in this pursuit of introducing UNIVERSAL ETHICS which eventually culminated into the launch of an extremely important and efficacious program, a gift and legacy for the world, known as Social Emotional Ethical Learning; in short, SEE Learning, as a great mission of HH the Dalai Lama, undertaken by Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. Any Institution or even individuals can take the maximum benefit from this program. All materials are available for free. Even teacher trainings are given for free for the Institutions. This is also to bring it to your attention, that many Institutions from across the globe have been receiving the benefit of this program.

I am confident that many future generations will reap the benefit to change the course of the world from darkness of ignorance and miseries to the light of happiness, equality and breathing fresh air of compassion and harmony.

Let me read a verse from the poem His Holiness wrote for Ecology and another verse which HH always recite for the joy of the entire world of sentience and non-sentience.

*Being attentive to the nature
Of interdependence of all creatures
Both animate and inanimate
One should never slacken in one's efforts
To preserve and conserve nature's energy.*

*As long as space remain,
As long as sentient beings remain,
May I too remain
To dispel the miseries of the world.*



With my profound thanks to the Organizers who worked so tirelessly since the inception of the planning for this conference.

Organizers:

International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM)	Emeritus Professor Dr Osman Bakar
Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM)	Mr. Faisal Aziz
Vajrayana Buddhist Council of Malaysia (VBCM)	Mr. Pek Chee Hen
Theravada Buddhist Council of Malaysia (TBCM)	Mr. Tan Leng Huat
Tibetan Buddhist Culture Centre of Malaysia (TBCC)	Mr. Casey Liu
International Students of Islamic Psychology (ISIP)	Mr. Seyed Jamaludin Behrang Miri
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I like to thank Mr. Tseten Samdup la, a Secretary of HH the Dalai Lama who called me to do this presentation.

I must not miss to express my deep admiration to Mr. Jinpa la, The Coordinator of the Office of HH the Dalai Lama, South East Asia.

May the Covid-19 subside from the world altogether, so that all the beings can breathe the fresh air of compassion, joy and greater meaning again.

Thank you all for your kind listening.