

The Environment from an Islamic Perspective

Leaders from the Islamic and other international communities assembled for the first International Environment Forum from an Islamic Perspective at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 23–25 October 2000. Deputy Minister, Prince Abdul Rahman Ibn Abdul Aziz, welcomed participants by pointing out that the teachings of Islam regarding the environ-



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ment are applicable now more than ever. The aim of the conference was to explain to non-Muslims the Islamic viewpoints on this issue. Among the distinguished guests in attendance were Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, Abdul Al Aziz Al Tuwaijri, Director General of the Islamic Organisation for Education, Sciences and Culture, Nizar Ibn Ibrahim Tawfiq, the Chairman of the Meteorology and Environment Protection Department and Secretary General of the Ministerial Committee for the Environment and Abdul Aziz Abou Znada, the Secretary General of the National Organisation for Wildlife Protection and Development.

Prince Abdul Rahman quoted verses from the Holy Quran and some sayings of the Prophet Muhammad that advocate cleanliness and protection of the environment, such as “people should not only clean their appearances but their inner souls.” He summarised by saying that according to the principles of Islamic law, it is the responsibility of mankind to ensure a healthy environment and to take special care in order to avoid all forms of pollution which today includes many dangerous forms of man-made waste, such as hazardous chemicals.

Addressing the gathering, Nizar Tawfiq who acted as Supervisor General of the Forum, lauded

the efforts of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), the United Nations Environment Programme and the Meteorology and Environment Protection Department in the Kingdom in organising this important conference. He said that environment issues should never be separated from development matters and that the deteriorating state of the environment in any given society is due to the irresponsible behaviour of individuals. Among the themes that were discussed during the conference were the relationship between environment and development from an Islamic perspective, the Islamic view of environmental aspects in the new international order as well as the free international trade. After reviewing these overarching issues, these were summarised in the Jeddah Environment Declaration from an Islamic perspective.*

Conference participants agreed that this Declaration shall be considered a major strategic document which reflects the great attention being accorded by the Muslim world to the environment and sustainable development. The document emphasises the shared responsibility of States to prevent the exhaustion of natural resources and to decrease environmental pollution, and thus urges the development of multilateral initiatives in order to find positive solutions to environmental problems. Rich countries are urged to take into account the interests of poor countries and to avoid the implementation of projects at the expense of poor nations’ development agendas. Prince Abdul Rahman expressed hopes that the Jeddah Declaration will also be adopted by the Organisation of the Islamic Conference



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and, ultimately, that it will be formally presented in the name of the Muslim countries at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in 2002.



* The complete text of the Declaration is to be reprinted in *International Protection of the Environment: Conservation in Sustainable Development*, Oceana Publications, Dobbs Ferry, New York.