

Climate Change and Islam: A Global Perspective

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Abstract

Destruction of the environment in recent times has worsened due to the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources by human beings in order to generate profits. Allah Almighty created all things in precise measurements. These measurements guarantee the survival and sustainability of natural resources. The environment was not an issue or subject for separate treatment in life as it flowed onwards in both war and peace. The human condition was never separated from the natural order. It was a matter to be reckoned with at every moment of existence like the very air we take into our lungs. Islam considers environmental protection as the only way of maintaining balance of life and provides a framework that proposes key principles for tackling climate change. The escalating challenges of climate change requires not only technical solution but also better insights in the understanding of relevant belief and identity system in which religion plays an important role. The planetary system, the earth and its ecosystems, all work within own limits and tolerances. Islamic teaching likewise sets limits to human behaviour as a control against excess and it could be said that the limits to the human conditions are set within the four principles- which are: the unity principle (*Tawhid*), the creation principle (*Fitra*), the balance principle (*Mizan*) and the responsibility principle (*Khalifa*). What we consider to be the essentials which will bring into focus the dimensions of change that are needed today from an Islamic Perspective. This paper attempts to explore the issues regarding climate change from the conventional viewpoint and stresses upon the significance of Islam in addressing these issues.

Key words: Climate change, environment, natural resources, sustainability, natural order, Islam.

The Creator - whom we know as Allah Almighty – has created the Universe in all its diversities, 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 Allah's creatures.¹

I. Introduction

The anthropogenic interference on the Earth's environment has a weakening impact on its climate. There was an agreement of nations on fresh Global Goals² to help refurbish and

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¹Preamble (1.1), Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change.

² The Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

sustaining the comfort of people around the globe. For the success of these Goals, the cultural and religious entities are required to necessarily implement them and Islam presents a holistic view of Almighty's creation and the holy Qur'an sets forth duties to care for the Earth.³ The threat that climate change poses to human well-being and the health of the planet is unequivocal.⁴ The extensive review which shapes the second part of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) sixth assessment report-AR6, cautions that any more delay in global action to climate change and adapt to its impacts, "will miss a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all". Spotting on the influences of global warming and contemplations to adapt to it, the report considerably explains how climate change is being experienced across the globe. Among the findings of the report, includes that:

- Climate change has caused "considerable damages and increasingly permanent losses, in terrestrial, coastal and freshwater and also to the maritime ecosystems".
- It is likely that the amount of all freshwater and terrestrial species is "at high risk of destruction and extinction".
- About 3.3 to 3.6 billion people "are living in such contexts that are extremely vulnerable, it is "causing humanitarian crises" and "increasingly driving dislodgment in all regions, with little island states excessively affected".
- Growing weather and climate severe events "have exposed hundreds of millions of people to heightened food insecurity and shortened water security", with the most noteworthy impacts seen in many parts of Asia, Africa, Central America and South America, even other small islands and the arctic region.
- Approximately, 50-70% of the world population might be exposed to "life-threatening climate conditions" due to heightened heat and humidity by 2100.
- Climate change "will increasingly put more pressure on the production and access of food, notably in vulnerable regions, resulting into diminished food security".
- The extreme weather events "shall drastically raise ill health and premature deaths".

The report further cautions that if global warming crosses global average temperature to 1.5⁰C more, even before falling back again "human and ecosystem will face extra harsh risks to life and livelihood that are irreversible".⁵ The looming menace of climate change is not just to ecosystem and biodiversity, but also has direct consequences of mass extinction. Due to the risk of changed climatic conditions the survival of our civilization is at stake that is why we must guard what remains and start the refurbishment of wild areas at a fast and unprecedented scale. In fact, if we are able to restore just about 30% of what was lost in last 30 years, we will be able to accomplish at least 37% of less carbon footprints, which is

³ Hamad, N. B. (2017). *Foundation for Sustainable Development: Harmonizing Islam, Nature and Law*. Pace University, New York, NY

⁴ The latest report from United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)- working group II contribution to the IPCC Sixth Assessment Report assesses the impact of climate change, looking at ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities at global and regional levels. It also reviews vulnerabilities and the capacities and limits of the natural world and human societies to adapt to climate, AR6 Climate Change February-2022. The IPCC was created to provide policymaker with regular scientific assessment on Climate Change, its implications and potential future risks, as well as to put forward adaptation and mitigation options.

⁵ Ibid.

prerequisite to keep the climate emergency in check. Another major reason of the mass extinction that may accelerate climate change is the destruction of wildlands for industrial use and infrastructural development projects. We should protect and restore wild nature in every country, region, and community.⁶

The effects of climate change extent the impacts on physical environment, ecosystem and human societies due to ongoing anthropogenic activities. The potential impact of climate change depends on how much nations decrease greenhouse gases emission and adapt to climate change.⁷ Effects that scientists predicted in the past, loss of sea ice, rise in sea level and more intense heat waves, are now occurring.⁸ The changes in climatic conditions are not expected to be same across the Earth. In particular, land areas change more rapidly than oceans, and northern high latitudes change faster than the tropics. There are three major causes in which global warming shall make alteration in the regional climatic conditions: melting ice, changing the hydrological cycle (of evaporation and precipitation) and changing currents in the oceans. The uptake of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is leading to ocean acidification.⁹ Climate change has tarnished land by rising temperatures, drying soils and increasing wildlife risk.¹⁰ Recent warming has affected more natural biological systems.¹¹ Many species worldwide are migrating poleward to colder areas. On land, species move to higher elevations, whereas marine species find colder water at greater depths.¹² Between 1% and 50% of species on land were assessed to be at considerably higher risk of extermination due to climate change.¹³ Coral reefs and shellfish are susceptible to the collective threat of ocean warming and acidification.¹⁴ Food security and access to fresh water are at risk due to rising temperatures. Climate change has deep impact on human health, directly via heat waves and indirectly via the spreading infectious diseases. Economic disparity is exacerbated by climate change. This has resulted in environmental migration, especially in developing countries where people are directly reliant on land for food, feed, fibre, timber and energy.¹⁵

II. Global Response

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 reply to many natural

⁶ Wild's Global Survival Revolution- Wild Foundation 2022.

⁷ Oppenheimer, M., et al., section 19.7.1: Relationship between Adaptation Efforts, Mitigation Efforts, and Residual Impacts, in: Chapter 19: Emergent risks and key vulnerabilities (archived 20 October 2014), pp. 1080-1085, in IPCC AR5 WG2 a 2014

⁸ "The Effects of Climate Change" NASA.gov. 21 February 2022.

⁹ IPCC SRCCL Summary for Policymakers. 2019. p. 9.

¹⁰ IPCC SRCCL Summary for Policy Makers. 2019. P. 9.

¹¹ Rosenzweig; et al., "Chapter 1: Assessment of Observed Changes and Responses in Natural and Managed Systems" IPCC AR4 WG2 2007, Executive summary 28 December 2018.

¹² Pecl, Gretta T.; Araujo, Miguel B.; Bell, Johann D.; Blanchard, Julia; Bonebrake, timothy C.; Chen, I.-Ching; Clark, Timothy D.; Colwell, Robert K.; Danielsen, Finn; Evengard, Birgitta; Falconi, Lorena (31 March 2017).

¹³ Settele, J.; Scholes, R.; Betts, R.; Bunn, S.; et al. (2014). "Chapter 4: Terrestrial and Inland water systems". IPCC AR5 WG2 A 2014. P. 300. Retrived 2 January 2020.

¹⁴ Hoegh-Guldberg, O.; Jacob, D.; Taylor, M.; Bindi, M.; et al. (2018). "Chapter 3: Impacts of 1.5°C Global Warming on Natural and Human Systems. IPCC SR15 2018.

¹⁵ Climate Change Is Already Driving Mass Migration Around the Globe, 18 December 2019 at the Wayback Machine, Natural Resources Defences Council, 25 January 2019.

factors. Most of these changes have been gradual, such that the forms and communities of life have accommodated consequently. There have been disastrous climate changes that brought about mass extinctions, but over time, life adjusted even to these impacts also, flowering anew in the surfacing of balanced ecosystems such as those we treasure today. Climate change in the past was also influential in laying down huge 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 devastation of the very conditions that have made the life on Earth possible. For Islamic countries the Global Goals are significant. Sustainable development is one of the most vivacious present topics in the growth of domestic and international law. The legal dimensions of these Goals constitute also one of the least developed topics in international law, legal jurisprudence and scholarship.¹⁶

Sustainable development is not just a technical or political topic or an environmental concern. It is a holistic global problem, an ethical responsibility humanity shares to look up the lives of the present generation and to make sure a high quality of life for generations to come.¹⁷ Because ethics are guided by religion, Islam is imperative to this topic. The destiny of the planet Earth may well turn on how quickly human societies can get better the legal framework for sustainable development. The UN General Assembly¹⁸ observed that humans have but a decade or two before critical global ecosystems suffer significant irreversible consequences. But people can still choose a sustainable future, by learning how to manage their relationship with the earth.¹⁹

Most notably, Islamic principles also comprehend sustainable development through the holy *Qur'an* and interviews with the Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon him). Islamic principles require that everyone share in ways that improve the lives of the present generation and to ensure a high quality of life for future generations. This paper carries out an analysis of the concept of sustainable development in both international law and Islamic principles.

All Sustainable Development Goals are very important and useful in making the world work together towards the protection of the environment and its component. But in addition to these goals, Muslims should remember that Islam imposes a duty to protect the environment as well. As mentioned below, the teachings of Islam contain numerous environmental sustainability elements which are mentioned in different chapters in the Holy *Qur'an*.²⁰ In Islam, mankind and the environment's relationship are harmonious because of the view of the person as an overseer of our home, planet earth. Muslims have been directed to keep the environment in proper order rather than to damage it. Consequently, an Islamic approach to a sustainable development is completely in accordance with Shariah.

¹⁶Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier, and Ashfaq Khalfan. "Sustainable development law: principles, practices, and prospects." *OUP Catalogue* (2004)." p 80.

¹⁷ Ramlogan, Rajendra." *Sustainable development: towards a judicial interpretation*" Vol. 9. MartinusNijhoff Publishers, 2010.p.7.

¹⁸ UN General Assembly Resolution available at <http://www.un.org/en/ga/70/resolutions.shtml>

¹⁹Segger, Marie-Claire Cordonier, and Ashfaq Khalfan. "Sustainable development law: principles, practices, and prospects." *OUP Catalogue* (2004).

²⁰Umar, Usman Aminu, and M. F. Khamidi. "Green and Sustainable Development:An Islamic Perspective." 2012.

Having summarized the progression of policies on sustainability, one can examine some of the principle elements of sustainable development through the definite reference point of the Holy Qur'an and the words of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him). A huge number of verses in the Qur'an and several sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) show the great importance given to environmental concerns and the responsibility of the environment. Sustainable development can be defined, from an Islamic perspective, as a multi-dimensional process that seeks to "strike a balance between economic and social development on one side, and the environment on the other. It seeks for humans to use resources in the best possible way, accounting for the environment upon which those resources rely."²¹ From an Islamic point of view, human beings are representatives of Allah Almighty on Earth, and they are entitled to benefit from the Earth's resources without depleting or monopolizing.²² Instead humans shall see to it that they develop the planet in accordance with the provisions of the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, the Sunnah, with the understanding that current needs must be met without jeopardizing the rights of future generations.

Development is reported in Qur'an under the expression "Architecture and Construction." Allah (Subhana Watala) says:

*It is He who hath produced you from the earth and settled you therein indicating the necessity of expansion and building land.*²³

Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

*If the Final Day comes upon you while you were planting a seed, then continue on planting it.*²⁴

Clearly, the dictate is to honor the environment as a gift from the Creator.

Climate change is an international environmental issue. In economic theory terms, climate change is a public good issue, requiring global collaboration to achieve effective results. Since the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was first established in 1992, there have been extensive international discussions, known as "Conferences of the Parties" or COPs, aimed at reaching a global agreement on emissions reduction 1992, Rio de Janeiro UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Countries agree to reduce emissions with "common but differentiated responsibilities."

1995, Berlin The first annual Conference of the Parties to the framework, known as COP. U.S. agrees to exempt developing countries from binding obligations.

1997, Kyoto at the third Conference of the Parties (COP-3) the Kyoto Protocol is approved, mandating developed countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions relative to baseline emissions by 2008-2012 period.

²¹Nouh, Muhammad. "Sustainable Development in a Muslim Context." Faith Values and Education for Sustainable Development (2012): 39. p 39.

²² Ibid.

²³ Qur'an Hud (chapter no. 11: verse 61).

²⁴ Ibid.

2001, Bonn (COP-6) reaches agreement on terms for compliance and financing. G. W Bush administration rejects the Kyoto Protocol; U.S. is only an observer at the talks.

2009, Copenhagen COP-15 fails to produce a binding post-Kyoto agreement, but declares the importance of limiting warming to under 2°C. Developed countries pledge \$100 billion in climate aid to developing countries.

2011, Durban (COP-17) participating countries agreed to adopt a universal legal agreement on climate change as soon as possible, and no later than 2015, to take effect by 2020.

2015, Paris COP21 195 nations sign the Paris Agreement, providing for worldwide voluntary actions (NDC's) by individual countries.

2021, Glasgow Cop26 the UK hosted the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow on 31st October-13th November 2021.

In Cop26 the world has reached an agreement. The shift away from coal will only be gradual. At the COP26 conference in Glasgow, representatives of almost 200 countries agreed on a joint text on how to proceed in the fight against climate change. The countries agreed to a gradual shift from using coal to generating electricity. However, the wording of the commitment was weakened at the last minute under pressure from China and India. Instead of the originally proposed phasing out of coal, it speaks only of a gradual reduction in its use. Many delegates expressed disappointment with the two countries' concessions but eventually voted in favor due to the increased interest in the text.²⁵

III. Climate Change – Islamic Perspective

“And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And We have instructed those who were given the Scripture you and yourselves to fear Allah. But if you disbelieve - then to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And ever is Allah Free of need and Praiseworthy.” (4:131)

The above before Quranic verse, among others, gives us a clear picture of what is generally understood as the primary basis of an Islamic world view: the idea of “Tauhid”, or the oneness of Allah Almighty. In this “Tauhidic” world view the entire universe (all of existence) is seen as originating from Allah, returning to Him, and centered around Him. It is a world created and sustained by Allah with a purpose, and a design. As this entire universe is a product of His divine wish, it is a universe unfolding with a divine purpose. The reference point, the center of all things is Allah. From Him we have come, we owe our continued existence to Him and to Him we shall finally return.

Climate change is not an isolated issue. It has several aspects and inter-linkages namely, science and technology, economy and trade, diplomacy and politics - that makes it not just another issue in this complicated world of proliferating issues, but the mother of all issues. Climate change, however, is different from other problems facing humanity and it compels us

²⁵ The 26th United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP26) was launched on November 1, 2021, by a summit of world leaders. From October 31 to November 12, all 197 parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met at COP26.

to think differently at many levels. It obliges us to think about what it means to live as part of an ecologically interdependent human community. In the face of many diversities that characterize human society, climate change provides a potent reminder of one thing that we share in common - the planet Earth. All nations and all people share the same atmosphere. And, we only have one. Addressing the climate chaos by all the countries both individually and collectively, will be critical to the human well-being and prosperity of the present as well as the future generations.

Islam teaches its followers to take care of the earth. Muslims believe that humans should act as guardians, or khalifah, of the planet, and that they will be held accountable by Allah Almighty for their actions. This concept of stewardship is a powerful one, and was used in the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change to propel change in environmental policy in Muslim countries. In fact, Muslims need to look no further than the Quran for guidance, where there are approximately 200 verses concerning the environment. Muslims are taught that “greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth”. The reality is that nothing could be more Islamic than protecting Allah Almighty’s most precious creation: the earth. It is this approach that can reach the hearts and minds of the 1.9 billion Muslims around the world, and it must be integrated with, rather than neglected by, the climate movement.²⁶

In Islam, the environment is a broad concept. It includes climate and its components, plants, animals, sand, human being, and all things found on the ground or in the atmosphere. The concept of the environment in Islam is ‘a comprehensive concept that includes earth, sky, and mountains with all creatures, in addition to human and their motivations, emotions and instincts’. All these creatures were created to service the people. Therefore, the people are responsible for maintaining and conserving the environment. Islam forbids wasting of resources and destroying the environment. The Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W) ordered the Muslims not to cut trees during the war. He emphasized the conservation of the environment and the prevention of its destruction. Therefore, conserving the environment is a religious duty of every Muslim. The importance of environment in Islam extends to every environmental aspect. Maintaining the environment has a specific place in the Islamic thought.²⁷

It has often been observed that Islam cannot ordinarily be described as a religion and that it prescribes a way of life that goes beyond the performance of rituals. The word for religion (deen) is found in the Qur’an. The word deen, which appears in 90 different places, often in contexts that place it outside the purely ritual. Deen in essence describes an integrated code of behavior which deals with personal hygiene, at one end of the spectrum, to our relationships with the natural order at the other. It provides a holistic approach to existence; it does not differentiate between the sacred and the secular and neither does it place a distinction between the world of mankind and the world of nature. However, this Islamic mode of expression is now severely attenuated, having been swept aside by the forces of history, like the other older

²⁶Ibrahim Ozdemir, Professor Ibrahim Ozdemir is former Director General at Turkey’s Ministry of Education, the Founding Vice-Chancellor of Hasan Kalyoncu University and presently Professor of Philosophy at Uskudar University.

²⁷Abdussalam, M. 2010. Islam and environmental conservation. Journal of the Muslim soldier. Flak, L.

traditions, into a domain which treats the natural world exclusively as an exploitable resource. What we now understand is, as the secular ethic progressively seeped into the Muslim psyche and as industrial development, economic indicators and consumerism became the governing parameters of society, there has been a corresponding erosion of the Muslim perception of the holistic and a withering of its understanding of the sacred nexus between the human community and the rest of the natural order:

“The creation of the heavens and the earth is far greater than the creation of mankind. But most of mankind do not know it”²⁸

The Muslim world is gradually co-opted into the new world order by force of arms and by force of economics. The first is history and the second present day reality and what the Muslims lost in between these twin processes is the sap of Islam and its unique way of perceiving the universe. For us as Muslims, our deen is a whole, an organic reality, where every element has a function as a part of this whole. For example, Islamic law does not make sense without the ethical dimension of the divine revelation. Law in the West is amoral. It deals with human ends for human purposes. The Muslim idea of the highest form of civilization is that it is the one that is pleasing to Allah. In today's Western-dominated global order of which Muslims are a part, conspicuous consumption has become the highest imperative. There is something quite magical about the way money is created. No other commodity works quite the same way. The money supply grows through use; it expands through debt. The more we lend, the more we have. The more debt there is, the more there is. These tokens of value that we create from nothing and use every day grow exponentially ad infinitum. But we know that the natural world, which is subject to drastic resource depletion, has limits and is finite. This equation is lopsided and the question is for how long can we continue to create this infinite amount of token finance to exploit the real and tangible resources of a finite world. From this perspective, money, as the modern world has deliberately created it, assumes the characteristics of a virus that eats into the fabric of the planet. The consequences of this become visible as global environmental degradation.²⁹

Water appears in the Holy Quran in over 50 'verses' and 40 'Suras'.³⁰ Allah said, 'And Allah Almighty sends down rain from the skies, and gives therewith to the earth after its death'. Islam considers water as a basic element of life. Therefore, people and other creatures cannot live without water. The Qur'an says about these matters:

Allah sends down water from the sky and by it brings the dead earth back to life. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who hear. There is instruction for you in cattle. From the contents of their bellies, from between dung and blood, we give you pure milk to drink, easy for drinkers to swallow. And from the fruit of the date palm and the grapevine you derive both intoxicants and wholesome provision. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who use their intellect. Your Lord revealed to the bees: 'Build dwellings in the fruit

²⁸ Qur'an Ghafir, also known as Al-Mu'min (chapter no. 40: verse 56).

²⁹ Islam and the Environment; Fazlun M Khalid Volume 5, Social and economic dimensions of global environmental change, pp 332-339

³⁰ According to the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO).

*and travel the paths of your Lord, which have been made easy for you to follow'. From inside them comes a drink of varying color's, containing healing for mankind. There is certainly a Sign in that for people who reflect.*³¹

The universe we inhabit is a sign of God's creation as is the environment of our innermost selves. They both emanate from the One Source and are bonded by only one purpose, which is to serve the divine will. This bonding of the cosmic to the subatomic is the deep ecology of Islam but it is not a relationship of equals as we can see in the hierarchy of the food chain dominated by Man. Whilst the primary relationship is that between the Creator and the rest of His creation, the Creator Himself determined a subsidiary one, that between Man and the rest of His creation which the Qur'an defines as follows:

*"It is He Who created everything on the earth for you."*³²

*We did not create heaven and earth and everything between them as a sport.*³³

*We did not create heaven and earth and everything between them to no purpose.*³⁴

*He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you.*³⁵

The Quranic view holds that everything on the earth was created for humankind. It was Allah Almighty's gift to us, but a gift with conditions nevertheless and it is decidedly not something that one runs and plays with. The earth then is a testing ground of the human species. The tests are a measure of our acts of worship in its broadest sense i.e., living in a way that is pleasing to Allah, striving in everything we do to maintain the harmony of our inner and outer environments. In a time when our environment is constantly deteriorating causing extreme weather and climate change, we must turn to the ultimate guide in the words of the Quran which reminds us of the perfect creations of our lord as well as our entrusted responsibility as guardians on Earth. Corruption can have many forms like theft, fraud, and political crime. But we cannot forget the corruption that has led the environmental issue seen through the Great Pacific Garbage Patch and the mass deforestation of Amazon rainforest. The Quran reminds us the protection from corruption,

*"And do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption."*³⁶

The Quran also reminds us that Allah cares for us by creating our world with the Ozone Layer to protect us from UV rays that can harm us and other organisms. But Allah Almighty already knows that humans will destroy the Ozone Layer away with the greed and mentioned it as,

*"And we made the sky a protected ceiling, but they, from its signs, are turning away."*³⁷

³¹ Qur'an An-Nahl (chapter no. 16: verses 65-69).

³² Qur'an Al Baqara (Chapter no. 2: verse 28).

³³ Qur'an Al Anbiya (chapter no 21: verse 16).

³⁴ Qur'an Sad (chapter no. 38: verse 26).

³⁵ Qur'an Al Maeda (chapter no. 5: verse 48).

³⁶ Qur'an Al Baqara (chapter no. 2: verse 60).

³⁷ Qur'an Al Anbiya (chapter no 21: verse 32).

Allah has chosen and created us humans to preside over the earth. The Quran alludes to a stewardship role for humans through their title of being “khalifahs” or “guardians” over all of the earth;

“Remember when your lord said to the angels, I am going to place a successive human authority on earth.”³⁸

It is therefore our responsibility to fulfill this role that Allah has entrusted us with and this can be done through the safeguarding of the environment. 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 anthropogenic: 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 on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it that we are in danger ending life as we know it on our planet. This current rate of climate change cannot be sustained, and the earth’s fine equilibrium (Mizan) may soon be lost. As we humans are woven into 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 Allah Almighty-gifts such as functioning climate, healthy air to breathe, regular seasons, and living oceans.³⁹ 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?

Allah Almighty created the Earth in perfect equilibrium (Mizan), by his immense mercy we have been 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-include humans-thrive. The present climate change catastrophe is a result of the human disruption of this balance.

He raised the heaven and established the balance so that you would not transgress the balance. Give just weight – do not skimp in the balance. He laid out the earth for all living creatures.⁴⁰

We as Muslims who are considered as caretakers are accountable for all our actions;

*Then whoever has done an atom’s weight of good, shall see it,
and whoever has done an atom’s weight of evil, shall see it.⁴¹*

Our responsibility as Muslims is to act according to the example of the Prophet Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who –

- Declared and protected the rights of all living beings, outlawed the custom of burying infant girls alive, prohibited wanton killing of living beings for sport, guided his

³⁸ Qur’an Al Baqara (chapter no. 2: verse 30).

³⁹ Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change.

⁴⁰ Qur’an Ar-Rahman (chapter no. 55: verse 7-10).

⁴¹ Qur’an Al-zalzala (chapter no. 99: verse 7-8).

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.”

The words of Prophet Mohammad (peace and Blessing of Allah 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.*⁴²

The fear of Allah therefore, entails complete consciousness of the Divine Being, the love of Him, fear of His retribution and hope in His mercy. The Muslim, in order to realize this and be a true Believer, must submit totally, consciously and willingly to the will of His Lord, Creator and Cherisher. This is the person who will cultivate in themselves, inner peace and thence easily be at peace with their fellow creatures and environment. Inner peace in essence is nothing less than being one in purpose with the Creator.

*The names of all things which Allah taught Adam obviously included most of all, the nature and forms of all things material in our universe which have been made subservient to man.*⁴³

Above all as the ecological balance our Creator has placed in the universe for our continued survival, safety, peace and harmony. Justice must therefore be the watchword: social justice, legal and penal justice, political justice and yes indeed climate justice. Justice brings peace which is the very essence of Islam. Paradise is the Home of Peace and Allah is Peace.

IV. Conclusion and Suggestions

We are driven to conclude 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. Human kind cannot afford the slow progress we have seen in all COP(Conference of Parties-Climate Change Negotiations) processes. The process of climate change is taking place, and global greenhouse gasemissions are climbing at anincreasing rate. Islam encapsulates an environmental ethic that helps outward behaviour tobe more aligned with conservation principles. It also encourages spiritual development,which is believed to help nurture an inner

⁴² Hadith related by Muslim from Abu Sa’id Al Kudri.

⁴³ Qur’an Luqman (chapter no. 31: verse 20).

state that eases the actualization of these values. This has implications in the reduction of carbon footprints and utilizing green energy sources, hence producing a platform of ethics that is congruent with the kind of changes associated with climate change solutions. There is a danger that a tipping point will be reached and climate change will become out of control. Islam views humankind as guardians of the earth, and provides a vision that conforms to the need for maintaining ecological balance. It also gives a direction to work for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Human activity is putting such a strain on the natural functions of the earth that the ability of the planet's ecosystem to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted. Over-exploitation of natural resources is generating enormous deficit between what we are consuming and what we are left with, hence it is putting more pressure on environment and its sustainability. A particularly important role can be played by Islam as we see our *Deen* as a powerful source of solutions to help preserving the Earth and 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 examples of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and bring about a resolution to the challenges that we face now.

- We are but a tiny part of the divine order, yet within that order we are extraordinarily powerful beings, and have the responsibility to create good and prevent evil in every way we can.
- We must intend to phase out greenhouse gases emission as soon as possible in order to steady greenhouse gas concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere.
- There is a need to realize that unjust economic growth on a planet which is vulnerable, 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 susceptible, to the climate change impacts already ongoing and expected to carry on for many years to come.
- To mitigate the environmental degradation and prioritize adaptation efforts with appropriate support to the vulnerable countries with the least capacity to adapt.