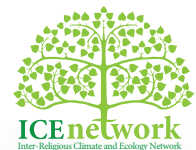




Inter-religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation

Islander Center, Sewalanka Foundation
Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, 23-27 September 2012



International Network
of Engaged Buddhists



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Executive Summary

Conference Overview

The Inter-religious Dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation was held in Sri Lanka from the 23 to 27 September 2012 through the collaborative efforts of INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists), Sewalanka Foundation, IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) and CEESP (Commission on Environmental Economic and Social Policy).

The concept of the conference developed out of recommendations at the INEB bi-annual conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 2009, where working group discussions prioritised the urgent need for a Buddhist response to climate change and exploration of pathways for collective action. Drawing from the African experience of the “We Have Faith” inter-religious campaign represented at the 17th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC COP 17) in Durban, South Africa, a faith-based conference was proposed for the Asian region, expanding beyond INEB’s Buddhist focus to collaborate across different faith traditions in order to bring the voice of morality and ethics of human behaviour into dialogue and identify co-operative actions on climate change.

“...There will be great suffering caused by our human created climate change, but we may need to go through this process in order to see the ‘light.’ ”

Nigel Crawhall

(IUCN, CEESP representative, South Africa)

Over 150 people representing 20 countries from Asia and across the planet from Buddhist, Hindu, Baha’i, Christian (Catholic and Protestant), Asian animists/naturalists from Sri Lanka (Vedda) and Vietnam, and Islamic faith traditions, gathered at Sewalanka’s

peaceful Islander Center, which itself provides a unique model for sustainable living, community cross-cultural and interfaith relationship building, and biodiversity regeneration in an area scarred by the impacts of war and extremes of unpredictable climate patterns¹.

Here, faith leaders, environmental and climate scientists, conservationists and social activists from across the region converged to collaboratively explore the scientific foundations of climate change and biodiversity loss, its social, political and economic drivers, the impacts of climate change on human societies and the environment, and importantly, the underlying human behaviours which contribute to climate change.

Together, a common understanding of the causes and impacts of climate change was articulated. Discussion evolved from an exploration of the human drivers of climate change, which are integrally tied to an overuse/abuse of fossil fuels and extractive industries, and a failure to reduce their continued exploitation. Over-consumption and greed, profit-seeking, extreme socio-economic inequalities and lack of educational opportunities are entrenched in our social systems, yet solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss are rooted in the same paradigmatic thinking that has led us to this critical juncture.

“Are the purveyors and promoters of fossil energy the horsemen of the apocalypse?”

Ranil Senanayake

(Rainforest Rescue International)

¹ <http://www.sewalanka.org/islander>.

An emphasis was placed on the urgent need to address inner spiritual values as they relate to our human stewardship and inter-connected care and protection for our natural environment. The prevailing attitudes across faith communities which contribute to a failure of our responsibility towards the living world were critically examined. These attitudes support behaviours and actions that accelerate and exacerbate our current climate crisis, and contribute to human vulnerability to the increasing impacts of climate change. Structural impasses were also cited as an area that also must be urgently rectified, most alarmingly the absence of an international binding agreement for reduction of Green House Gas emissions (GHG). The identification of these key issues rose up through a group analysis of cause and effects, from scientific, political, experiential and spiritual perspectives, inspiring a committed and collective faith-based response. This response recognizes the need to move beyond personal affiliations and identities, towards a cooperative action that embraces solutions embedded within faith values, ecological ethics and climate science.

A Faith-based and Ethical response

Only by recognizing and engaging with underlying human behaviours and actions can there be any movement towards sustainable solutions. The problem is not just a matter of uncontrolled GHG emissions - there is a more serious and toxic problem of inequalities and a disregard for life which has become systematic in the behaviour of many states, the private sector, leaders and ordinary people.

A faith-based approach combined with ecological ethics lights our pathway towards a sustainable, healthy and balanced existence as part of the living planet. It seeks an understanding of humans in healthy relationship to the world around us, rather than a narrow perspective based upon short-term

and myopic self-interest. Climate science and the implications of biodiversity loss also point to this critical understanding of our inter-connectedness with all living beings, for all time, within the living world.

Our response to climate change seeks to mobilise interfaith leaders, establish networking with other committed social actors, climate scientists, organisations and groups across the region and beyond, while simultaneously focusing on micro and macro level practical interventions within a faith-based and ethical approach.

Commitments and Roadmap for Action

The context of this conference – post-civil war Sri Lanka, where extremes in climate conditions are adding further stresses on an already marginalised population - shows us that climate change cannot be understood, or solutions developed, in isolation. Its impacts are connected to the intricate web of human existence, and therefore solutions to climate change must also be solutions to livelihoods, peace and well-being. A faith-based response aligns with this understanding. Our commitments to action look beyond technological fixes, by promoting an alternative ‘development’ model which strengthens resilience and sustainability, integrity and social justice, over the values of mass acquisition or a persistent drive towards over-production and consumption.

A tripartite approach will guide actions resulting from this conference, addressing the key strategic areas where an integrated faith-based response can organise and engage directly to mitigate impacts and integrate adaptation responses, and importantly, solutions which recognize the human drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss:

- **Micro Level:** Faith traditions continue to play

a strong role in the everyday life of communities across Asia. Faith leaders should collaborate across inter- and intra- faith networks to educate and raise awareness among faith leaders and faith communities around Climate Change and biodiversity, and to facilitate community actions for mitigation and adaptation, rooted in long-term sustainable, equitable development.

- **Macro Level:** At a policy level, faith leaders have an essential role in advocating values and ethics, while leveraging their position within society to influence global negotiations and direct national and local policies - that are at this time rooted in national interests - for immediate and long-term health, safety and socio-economic and environmental well-being of political constituents.
- **Paradigm Change:** At all levels, from grassroots communities to local and national awareness and onto the global stage, a faith-based response has a critical role to play in advocating a paradigm change in values and orientations towards our planet and the way we coexist within it.

These three levels of engagement framed the creation of a roadmap for action drawn collaboratively by participants of the conference, based upon six thematic areas (see **Commitments of Faith in Action** for comprehensive details):

- **Education:** public awareness of climate change, biodiversity, ecology and social justice, training for clergy and lay people as change agents within their localities;
- **Advocacy:** national training on advocacy methods, opportunities, and processes related to climate change and the environment within a framework of social justice; specialised training on international advocacy; potential

online support to build regional and critical mass on specific advocacy campaigns within a given member's country or municipality;

- **Personal change and eco-ethics:** religious and inter- religious actions and awareness on personal change, building awareness of actionable impacts and areas to personally bring change, and personal agency for environmental transformation founded in eco-faith values;
- **Religious institutional change and eco-ethics:** changing the carbon footprints or environmental impacts of religious institutions, modelling behaviour and change institutions;
- **Community change and modelling:** modelling eco-villages, organic and ecological small scale farming, artisanal fisheries, local ecosystem conservation, urban gardening, food security projects, indigenous knowledge systems support, community forestry. Creating platforms for sharing innovations and successes in local transformations, resilience and changing how people treat each other and the Earth;
- **Institutionalisation of the network:** Media, websites, social networking media, sharing campaign, cross-Asian testimonies, building organisational capacity and developing a platform to share learning and experience, collaboratively problem solve, plan collective actions and potentially advocacy work. This global media platform can serve to facilitate and support the education, networking, community modelling, religious institutional support, and advocacy components drawn out in the preceding points.

The commitment to take forward the roadmap is supported by the set-up of a network named the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network (ICE Network)

among participants, as well as their invited contacts, which will provide a platform to develop concrete actions while also sharing program and advocacy experiences (lessons learned, transferrable, adaptable approaches), as well as relevant research and education resources. This will take the form primarily of a global media platform which will serve to facilitate and support the education, networking, community modelling, religious institutional support, and advocacy components drawn out in the previous points.

Secondly, INEB will take the coordinating role in the development of collaborative work plans and follow-up, in order to carry out the areas of action.

Thirdly, as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP) 19 will likely be in Korea, the Korean members of the network will be supported to host religious-related leaders and organisations to further the network's interfaith actions at the international advocacy level.

Initially, this will include building experience from the COP18 meeting in Doha, Qatar later in 2012.

“One might expect a conference and inter-religious dialogue on Climate Change and Biodiversity to be depressing, anxiety-inducing, overwhelming. Yes, this was overwhelming, but in terms of sheer power of compassionate, healing and hopeful energies. The path to transforming and navigating through our great challenges and upheaval as a planet has been lit up. Together, networks of grassroots, indigenous, and local communities—together we work to create healing, to protect each other and the planet as we ride this wave, a wave promising loss, death and rebirth, promising to push us to change. We can guide and determine, together, how we can go through this”.

*Emilie Parry
(Sustainable Transformation, USA)*



Introduction

Background and Rationale

The background of this conference began back in 2009, during INEB's bi-annual conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, through the collaboration of network members from Sewalanka, IUCN and INEB's Secretariat Office. Here, discussions among thematic working groups explored the role of Buddhists in addressing climate change issues, leading to recommendations for INEB to initiate an inter-religious conference on climate and environmental justice built upon local experiences, national networking strategies and global witnessing and advocacy. Nigel Crawhall – an INEB executive member and South Africa representative of IUCN and CEESP - helped to facilitate this process of engagement, which initially drew upon the African experience of the “We Have Faith” inter-religious campaign represented at the 17th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC COP 17 in Durban, South Africa. INEB gained further experience by representing at the “We Have Faith” conference in Nairobi with INEB Sri Lankan representative, Venerable Kalupahana. At INEB's most recent bi-annual conference in Bodhgaya, India in late 2011, climate change was formally integrated into the sphere of issues engaged with by INEB and its network members.

"In Durban, African Faith Communities will have a tremendous authority, legitimacy and power to bring back to the climate negotiations a sense of responsibility, and we in UNEP and the UN family as a whole are ready to work with you, to assist you and equally to draw on you to assist us, to ensure that people will not lose faith in their own ability to make a difference."

*Achim Steiner,
UN Under-Secretary-General and*

*UNEP Executive Director, We Have Faith
Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 9 June 2011*

Implicit within the development of the conference was the expansion from INEB's Buddhist focus, towards collaboration across different faith traditions in order to bring the voice of morality and ethics of human behaviour into dialogue and cooperative actions on climate change. Formative actions included Sewalanka co-sponsoring resolution 009 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress in September 2012, which invites closer cooperation of the faith sector on climate and biodiversity advocacy.

These actions together provided the foundation and vision for the Inter-religious Conference on Climate Change and Biodiversity Conservation, which themselves are part of a larger programme of action on religion and climate change. The conference was designed with the awareness that COP 19 is likely to be in Korea, providing Asian interfaith leaders with a crucial opportunity to represent a moral response to climate change for the Asia region. Beyond Asia, this conference was also aimed to inspire steps towards a greater synergy across regions of the world, engaging a broad representation of interfaith leadership, and joining with other climate justice actors in advocacy and practice efforts, towards environmental and ecological responsibility.



Conference Objectives

In order to inspire a commitment from interfaith leaders, as well as environmental and climate scientists, conservationists and social activists to engage with the core drivers of declining biodiversity and climate change, the conference was structured around four main objectives:

- Understanding the human drivers of climate change and biodiversity loss from a scientific and socio-political-economic perspective, and exploring its impacts within and across communities and bio-regions
- Articulating a faith-based interpretation of the causes, effects and change theory
- Initiating an analysis of the hindrances holding back national and global action on the drivers
- Developing an initial road map for inter-religious cooperation, particularly in the Asian context to engage in appropriate action to bring about socially just, sustainable and healthy communities within healthy environments.

These components were embedded within a process of learning and sharing designed to encourage mutual respect and relationship building among participants, in order to strengthen commitments for collaborative action. Processes were integrated to draw upon the wealth of knowledge and experience of participants, foremost being the parallel discussion sessions whose outcomes then formed the scope and direction of the roadmap of actions. Other channels of participation were also encouraged such as the 'democracy wall', which gave participants space to reflect their experiences and share with others their own observations, ideas, commitments and recommendations. All of these

learning processes were supported by the setting of the Islander Centre, which practices a simplicity ethic integrated within the beauty of its natural surroundings.

Two study visits prior to the conference sessions were also integrated into the programme in order to see the visible impacts of climate change in Sri Lanka, and hear direct experiences from grassroots people affected and the challenges they are facing. These visits sparked the compassion and inspiration needed to guide discussions and frame solutions within the conference.



Organisation of the Report

This report begins with an executive summary and outcomes from the conference, and goes on to present a synopsis of sessions, and a detailed presentation of the roadmap for action. It is divided into seven sections, relating to the order in which they were presented within the conference. The first section presents the opening remarks given by the Chairperson of the INEB Executive Committee and the hosting organisation Sewalanka, Harsha Kumara Navaratne. The second section overviews the two study visits that took place prior to the commencement of the conference. These were facilitated by Sewalanka and Welthungerhilfe, and provided a context of climate change from the experiences of vulnerable grassroots communities who are already having to cope with its unpredictable impacts. The third section overviews the opening sessions of the conference, which provided input on the science of climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as an exploration into its human drivers. The fourth section introduces the first rounds of parallel discussions. These discussion sessions engaged participants in small groups to explore in more detail specific areas of climate change and biodiversity loss impacts. The first round



emphasised a bio-regional perspective, exploring the mountains, plains and rivers, and coastal areas of Asia and beyond, in order to connect experiences of impacts with wider processes of climate change science. The second round of discussions explored in more depth important aspects of climate change, including fossil fuel usage and its alternatives, and the growth of climate-related disasters and politics of humanitarian aid. The fifth section provides an overview of a keynote speech by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, a highlight of the conference, and a panel discussion on faith-based approaches to the environment, and ensuing responsibilities. Six faiths were represented and provided an overview of religious teachings and their illustration of interconnectedness with nature and human responsibilities. The sixth session broadens the scope of discussions towards a political level, exploring hindrances to global agreements on GHG emissions, and proposed solutions within climate change negotiations at local, national and international levels. The seventh section overviews the final two parallel discussion sessions that culminated in an initial road map of action, which is the major outcome of this conference, and projects the way forward.



Opening Speech

Harsha Kumara Navaratne- INEB Chairperson and Sewalanka Foundation Chairman



Dear reverend monks and other religious leaders.

Dear brothers and sisters.

Dear friends.

In 2009, at the biennial INEB conference in Chiang Mai Thailand, our dhamma brother Nigel raised a very important issue. He said that engaged Buddhists have a responsibility to take action on climate change.

The Buddha taught us to have compassion and loving kindness for all living beings. There is a strong Buddhist tradition of environmental conservation, a tradition of protecting water, forests, and animals. Nigel said that Buddhist practitioners have a responsibility to respond to climate change and the suffering that it is creating. We have a responsibility to address the root causes, mitigate the impact and adapt to change in our own communities.

We also have a responsibility to engage with others. There are so many people already working hard on these issues, and we need to learn from each other. We need to have a dialogue between religious traditions, faith based organizations, scientists, development practitioners, and social movements, and all together we need to have a dialogue with policy makers.

So we accepted Nigel's request to have a dialogue on climate change. INEB agreed to organize it, Sewalanka agreed to host it, and IUCN agreed to provide technical support. Our German partner, Welthungerhilfe, assisted with the study tours and some of the other local costs.

We are very grateful for this opportunity to be together, and on behalf of INEB, Sewalanka, IUCN, and Welthungerhilfe, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Sri Lanka and to the Islander Center.

As you know, our country is emerging from 30 years of war. The war damaged not only our society, but also our natural environment. The people who joined the study visits the last 2 days would have seen this. Thousands of acres of land were destroyed and half a million trees were cut down. Climate change is exacerbating these challenges. Weather patterns have changed. Normally by the end of September, this whole area, including our farm, becomes green. The reservoir is full of water and the crops are starting to come up. Now, the rains are late, and many communities are facing extreme drought. When the rains do come, they come very hard and at the wrong times. There have been severe floods in recent years, and thousands of acres of food have been lost. The pressure is high on rural people.

We are happy to welcome you to Islander because this is a place that we are trying to bring back what we lost...and prepare for an uncertain future. We have been working to bring back the trees and the forest cover, and already the birds and small animals have started to return.

Now we are collecting traditional seeds and mother plants from all over the country. We are developing systems to store and conserve water, and are partnering with groups all over the country to do agriculture in a more sustainable way.

Last night, I was sitting with Dr. Ranil Senanayake, one of Sri Lanka's best systems ecologists. An insect was walking near us, and I asked Ranil "Who is this fellow?" He looked at it, and he told me that it was a certain kind of beetle. He explained that this beetle is high on the food chain. It's a predator and it can eat lots of other insects. When that fellow is here, it means that chemicals are not

being sprayed and the system is more in balance. I was very happy to hear that. We do not have all the solutions and we make many mistakes, but step by step we are trying.

I have to be honest. In the past, I thought that climate change was an issue for scientists. It was too big and overwhelming for me to get involved. But in recent years, my views have changed. I was reading the newspaper last week, and I saw an article explaining climate change. It said...

"Global warming affects the global climate and creates extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, tornadoes, hurricanes, and cyclones. It modifies rainfall patterns, amplifies coastal erosion, creates acid rains, changes the seasons, destroys ocean ecosystems including algae and coral reefs, alters the ranges of some infectious diseases and creates natural forest fires."

When I was reading this, I was thinking "How can I leave this situation to my children? Is this moral? Is it ethical for us to leave this to the next generation?" When you read papers and listen to speeches, it is clear that the world's biggest political leaders are not working genuinely to find answers to this global crisis. Are we going to allow them to continue like this?

This issue is too big for that. We cannot just wait for our governments and political leaders to make changes. We ourselves have to take action. So that raises the question, "what can we do? What are the practical steps we can take as individuals, as small groups, as national networks, and as international networks?"

This is what we are here to discuss, as spiritual leaders, practitioners and scientists. I hope that in the next few days, we all can develop new relationships and clear plans for action. With that hope, I welcome you and thank you for coming all the way here.

Study Visits

Facilitated by: Sewalanka Foundation and Welthungerhilfe

In order to provide context to the conference, a two-day study visit was organised for participants to visit the northern areas of Vavunia, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Anuradhapura. The visits aimed not only at seeing the visible impacts of climate change in Sri Lanka, but also to meet and hear direct experiences from grassroots people affected and the challenges they are facing, so that their stories could spark the compassion and inspiration needed to guide discussions and frame solutions within the conference.

The most striking image of Sri Lanka from the visits was the ever-present context of a country coping with the impacts of a 30-year civil war. Unlike the experiences of most visitors to Sri Lanka, the tourist destinations of beaches and misty-covered rainforests and tea plantations in the south, these journeys led us through drought-impacted resettlement areas of Buddhist, Christian and Muslim communities on both sides of the northern demarcation line, between war-impacted areas, and those lucky to escape the conflict.



Study Visit One

Our first stop at 'Manik Farm' provided an insight into the interplay between the context of a post-civil war country where people are beginning to rebuild their lives, and the impacts of natural resource depletion and climate change. Here, 10,000 acres of forest were clear felled to make way for the construction of temporary housing for 300,000 displaced people. Over 30 years of civil war, people and animals have been pushed out by fighting, and environmental systems destroyed. Now, they are dealing with resettlement in these areas which is both contributing to, and being impacted by climate change.

"we have been too busy dealing with the war - the IDP's, the conflict, the resettlement - only now can we begin to think about climate change".

Sewalanka field coordinator

Although the area visited is a natural dry zone, extremes in weather conditions are beginning to have major effects on resettled communities. At Thekam reservoir we learned that last year saw the highest flooding levels, cutting off surrounding villages, while this year the villages are plagued with drought. Late rains have resulted in Sri Lanka's traditional water harvesting system, a network of large 'tanks' connecting to smaller feeder tanks, being dry for almost 2 months. The Giant Tank - used for irrigation of 250,000 acres - was desolately dry. Communities visited were struggling to find drinking water, let alone irrigation for crops and water for their animals which are critical for their food security. On top of this was the extreme vulnerability of livelihoods, where people are struggling to find sources of

income in their newly resettled communities, within the scarred landscape.

On the coastal region of Mannar, we visited a resettled fishing village, where the impacts of climate change were dramatic. Over their two years of resettlement, the shoreline had eroded 15 metres. Fishermen complained about the depletion of catch numbers. They had also noticed coral dying and most importantly, the increasing unpredictability of the weather which has left them vulnerable to dangerous sea conditions.

All the communities we visited in this area have critically depended on the surrounding environment for their livelihoods. After struggling with the impacts of war, now climate change is pushing them to the edge of vulnerability, without their understanding of why.



Study Visit Two

The first stop of our visit was at a local fishermen's community near the Pavakkulama Tank, which has been severely affected by unusual changes of season and drought. The drought periods have caused a loss of fish diversity, which has a big economic impact on the livelihood of this community. The members of the community

explained that the local government has tried to counteract the loss of diversity by introducing non-local fish species into the water in order to solve the low catch numbers. But their livelihoods are changing not only from the climate, but also as younger people in the community leave home to find their future in the city.

At Nakarilluppaikulam, almost all the villagers were forced to resettle during the war, returning back to their homes just a few years ago. They have since had further difficulties in securing their livelihoods because of a scarcity of crops and livestock. Civil society organizations have since tried to solve the resource scarcity and improve people's livelihood. We learned that conflict mitigation in this village is taken up by religious leaders from the Buddhist and Hindu faiths, with the religious leaders working closely with leaders from the community.

Located on the border between Sinhalese and Tamil-occupied territory, our next stop brought us to a major conflict zone during the civil war, Erupathana Nandhimi-thragala. The former conflict zone is considered the last forest frontier in Sri Lanka. There we could find abundant wild animals and plants, unlike most other forests in this area which were destroyed through war manoeuvres and resettlement.

We met with villagers and staff of Sewalanka Foundation who are tackling this issue to conserve and manage the forest area, in collaboration with the government. Here we found a source of light for the war-impacted communities, through actions to strengthen their participation in local resource management. Using a participatory conservation planning process, the community is taking a leading role in the stewardship of the forest, through integration of sustainable resource usage, directly contributing to climate change mitigation.



SESSION OVERVIEWS

Opening Plenary Speakers: Ven. Niyangoda Anunayaka Thero (Sanghanayaka Siam, Sri Lanka), Bishop Enoch Punitharaj (American Mission, Sri Lanka), Dr. Habib Mohammad Chirzin (Islamic Forum, Indonesia), Mr. Yoichi Noguchi (Niwano Peace Foundation, Japan), Lodi Gyari Rinpoche (Special Envoy of H.H. 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet)



Day 1 began after a traditional lamp lighting ceremony and an opening plenary that brought together the voices from represented faith traditions. This set the tone for the conference by reflecting upon the shared common values of the interconnectedness between humans and nature that are integral to responsibilities of caring for the planet. They also expressed the urgent need for people to come together and take responsibility and action, clearly framing the aim and importance of the conference to not just discuss problems, but to jointly seek solutions.

In order to provide a foundation of common understanding among the conference participants of the issues at stake, three speakers introduced key concepts of climate change, the drivers of climate change, and solutions. This was especially important for many of the representatives of faith and civil society leaders present, who have had little introduction into climate change, its indicators and impacts.

The Human Drivers of Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss

Keynote Speakers: Dr. Ranil Senanayake (Rainforest Rescue International, Sri Lanka), Dr. Ghana Gurung (WWF, Nepal), Professor Dewaka Weerakoon (IUCN, Sri Lanka). Moderators: Dr. Nigel Crawhall (IUCN, CEESP, South Africa), Dr. Vishaka Hidallage (Practical Action, Sri Lanka), Shiranee Yasarithne (IUCN, Sri Lanka)

Laying a foundation on key issues on climate change and biodiversity loss was Dr. Ranil Senanayake. He began with an overview of the central processes of photosynthesis in the creation of biomass - which represents fixed carbon content, productivity and ecological capital - and the importance of biodiversity - the patterns within the biomass - which determine its sustainability.

“[Through photosynthesis] everything solid in our bodies was once made solid by a plant sometime in the past. And we have forgotten to respect and have gratitude for what we have been given”.

Dr. Ranil Senanayake

A major issue in his thesis was debunking the heavily encouraged practice of planting trees in order to fix the carbon from the atmosphere. This cannot work, as a tree dies in an average of 50-100 years and then releases carbon again into the atmosphere. Secondly, biotic carbon held within trees is also very different from fossil carbon, the main difference being that fossil carbon takes tens of millions of years to sequester, compared to biotic carbon, which takes tens of thousands of years. The carbon economy, therefore is based on a false premise, and is contributing further to climate change.

“Planting trees will not control the carbon (fossil carbon) that fossil energy is putting out. Planting

trees (biotic carbon) can only balance the number of trees we cut down”.

Dr. Ranil Senanayake

Exploration into the drivers of climate change included the consumer-driven development model promoted across the globe today, which is reliant on fossil fuels to drive it, and which is increasing the rate of carbon in the atmosphere, to a state today whereby the climate is moving from stability into a state of chaos.

Other drivers of climate change were identified as the reduction of the natural cooling factor of deforestation beginning during the colonial period, and the subsequent loss of cloud condensation as major contributors. Also identified were the subsidies enjoyed by the fossil energy industry, and as a result, their continuing profitability offering little incentive for change.

“Trees represent just 1% of the biodiversity of a forest”.

Dr. Ranil Senanayake

Another important issue at stake that has been continually ignored, is the *leaves of plants* which contain living photosynthetic biomass, the terrestrial life support system of the earth-without which, nothing would live. Today it is undervalued and being lost at an exponential rate through deforestation and biodiversity loss. Instead, value is placed upon its products which

are 'dead', such as fruit and timber.

The context of the Asian bioregion was introduced by Dr. Ghana Gurung from Nepal, and the connections between the Himalaya and its source of Asia's major rivers. Impacts of climate change have resulted in glacial melts, landslides and extreme weather conditions which are increasing the vulnerability not only of local populations in the mountains, but also for the millions of people living downstream across Asia, who rely on the river systems as a source of livelihood.

This is extremely important because the Himalayan region has huge capacities for water storage – hence known as the 'third pole' - and the biggest impacts of climate change are on fresh water, which is the primary source to sustain human life and biodiversity. While the melting polar ice caps are predicted to cause rapid rises in sea water levels and warming of sea temperatures, the melting glaciers and ice fields will directly impact the 1.3 billion

people across the Asian region who rely on the river systems as a source of life.

“We have been shaping the climate for centuries, now it is beginning to shape us”

Dr. Ghana Gurung

Biodiversity loss was also explored in detail through understanding habitat loss of plant and animal species by Prof. Weerakoon. Habitat loss has resulted from the dissection of plant and species habitats, through increasing human encroachment. The cutting up of habitats has created a greater surface area of edges that connect with surrounding human societies, and therefore increasingly shrinking the habitat area, leading to loss of species, and therefore biodiversity loss. Our very existence relies on species biodiversity. The continual pressure on species and habitats is heading towards a crisis, which positions us on the edge of the sixth big extinction in recorded history, and notably, the only extinction that is human driven.



Throughout the presentations, the root causes of climate change, the overuse of fossil fuels and over-exploitation of the natural environment were found to be human. We are living within an economic development paradigm that is ultimately driven by greed and desire. This is being ignored by institutions and frameworks committed to finding solutions for climate change.

“We have changed this world like no other species have ever done before. We have taken and driven large numbers of species to the brink, or to extinction itself”.

Prof. Dewaka Weerakoon

Dr. Senanayake shared the words of Hocart, an archaeological commissioner working in Anuradhapura in 1922, who after returning to England, made timeless and prescient observations to the underlying human motivations that maintain this process.

According to Hocart, desires and fears constantly assault our peace, and without knowledge of how to temper these emotions - which religions provide insightful teachings on - we become controlled by their insatiability. In other words, we corrupt ourselves and the world around us through unrestrained greed. In Buddhist terms, desire and greed are identified as ‘poisons’, yet it is desire that is central to the functioning and continuation of the fossil fuel-dependent development paradigm.

Without addressing the values of consumerist consumption, there is little confidence that we will avert the disastrous predictions made by climate change scientists around the world. In practical terms, this means creating a new modern economy over the existing fossil fuel-driven economy that is rooted in an understanding of our interconnectedness and reliance on the living world for our survival. For Dr. Senanayake, this could take the form of placing a real price on fossil fuel energy, and shifting value towards living

photosynthetic biomass, and to the people who are invested in maintaining and growing biomass.

Also of key consideration are the urgent needs to address mitigation and adaptation actions to support vulnerable communities dealing with the impacts occurring today and the projected future. Examples from the Himalayan region shared by Dr. Gurung - which is the most vulnerable to climate change because of the altitude level, causing temperature increases to be felt most strongly - encouraged joint responses with neighbouring countries because of the important interconnections between the Himalaya with the plains and coastal areas across Asia. Children were also identified as key stakeholders in educating on climate change and adaptation because they will be growing up in a world no longer able to be guided solely by contextually-rooted environmental practices that have developed over generations. Integrating technologies such as drip irrigation for the efficient usage of water, and clean energy technologies such as biogas will be vital to sustain livelihoods of the people and lessen the impacts contributing to climate change.

“Forest is a magnificent organism. It gives us food, it gives us shelter, it gives us many things. It asks nothing in return for its sustenance. It even offers shade to the axe man who fells it. It is up to us to make sure that we preserve it, because our future relies on it”.

*Prof. Deewaka Weerakoon,
quoting Gautama Buddha.*



Parallel Discussions on Ecosystems, Energy and Disasters

From the foundational understanding of the human drivers of climate change, dialogue among the conference participants shifted to a more detailed explanation of the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, focusing on different altitudes and bioregions in Asia. These interactive sessions with scientists, clergy and lay people also expanded the dialogue to bring in shared experiences of impacts that are happening now. Many recommendations were also drawn out from the growing awareness of the scope and inter-connectedness of impacts being felt across communities, countries and regions.

THREE PARALLEL SESSIONS ON ECOSYSTEMS

Facilitators: Prashant Varma (Deer Park Institute, India), Jahath Gunawardhana (Environmental Legal Council, Sri Lanka), Bobo Lwin (Kalyanamitta Foundation, Myanmar), Dr. Indra de Silva, Dr. Nigel Crawhall (IUCN, CEESP, South Africa)

1. Mountain Ecosystems

Mountains are important as a source identity, a source of many of our lifelines such as rivers, springs and forests, as well as revered as a site of spiritual significance. Representing mountain areas

from across the region and the Americas, participants shared common causal factors of corruption and greed in the name of development, which are having negative effects upon mountain ecosystems and communities.

From the Himalaya, Dr. Gurung shared important scientific information on how temperature increases by one degree are felt strongest on mountain tops resulting in increased impacts. 'Black Carbon' has also become a huge issue, causing accelerated snow melt on glaciers and mountain tops. Water resources are also being threatened. Over 1.3 billion people rely on the Himalaya as a source of water, which highlights the urgent need for an agreement to be reached amongst the down-river countries.

Opportunities and solutions highlighted the important role of education in raising awareness on climate change. Faith-based groups were agreed as a key means of spreading knowledge. Faith-based groups also felt that their level of knowledge was so far inadequate on these issues; they require further training before they can integrate into their religious teachings. Mainstream education was discussed as a source of tension, because its learning approach is rooted within a consumer-driven development paradigm, which is often at odds with the real needs of society. Thus, developing appropriate, informative and contextual curricula was a solution the group agreed upon. Lastly, discussion centred around advocacy, and strengthening the confidence in people to speak out to influence the policies of the government towards climate change solutions.

2. Plains and Agriculture

Food Security, Soil, Organic Farming and GMO's

Direct emissions from agriculture have been increasing over time, and despite an increase in agricultural output and food availability, there has been a consistent decline in available agricultural land, which means increasing pressure on diminishing land areas to produce more food. The demand for meat is also increasing. Over the last 30 years, demands in developing countries have almost doubled. Further increases of up to 60% in the global meat demand are projected over the next 10 years, mostly in developing regions such as South and Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. The reliance on grain crops in the meat production process also results in an increasing demand on agriculture outputs. These pressures on increasing food and animal production on a shrinking land area are also being rapidly challenged not only by existing unsustainable agricultural practices, but also by changes in weather conditions causing issues such as drought, and soil degradation due to rising water tables and salination, and intrusion of sea water.

The solutions discussed to this scenario were the prioritization of organic agriculture. The group shared their experiences on high input, high energy agricultural production systems in order to increase the output of the land, which in the long run has many disadvantages. It was observed that in India, small scale food production systems have been neglected, while the Green Revolution only concentrated on irrigated agricultural production systems. Moreover, the use of fertilizer and chemicals in conventional high production systems increase GHG (Green House Gas) emissions and increase the contribution of the agricultural sector to the global GHG scenario. Instead, a focus should be placed on forest-based

livelihoods, small scale fisheries and home gardening to counter the impacts from conventional systems. Most governments concentrate on high production systems and tend to neglect the needs of farmers, thus farmers need to be empowered. Actions taken by governments on climate change mitigation and adaptation should be connected to farming practices, as well as to other sectors.

Rivers, Lakes, Wetlands and Water Security

This group discussed cases of changes of fresh water ecosystems and saw patterns of problems emerging across the Asian region as well as Europe and Africa. Examples from Myanmar and Kenya highlighted the issue of dam construction on the major rivers which are affecting downstream communities. In Sri Lanka, drought is contributing to water scarcity in the northern areas of the country, while in Thailand, flooding in the past year has seriously increased the vulnerability of livelihoods of farming communities. Causes of these impacts were found in common factors such as infrastructure and industrial development, water pollution, increasing population pressures, changing land-use patterns, and lack of concern on climate change impacts by policy makers and politicians.

Solutions discussed were varied, reflecting the need for multi-level responses to the degrading of water ecosystems. For policy makers, there is a pressing need for transparency, inclusiveness and responsibility in resource planning. Specific examples could be policy support to set up example demonstration sites of sustainable farming practices. At an educational level, there needs to be awareness of the interconnectedness of food, energy and water. The dignity of farmers needs to be encouraged, along with an understanding of the interdependence of humans and the environment.

3. Marine and Coastal Changes

Artisanal Fisheries and Coastal Management

The primary impacts of climate change on coastal environments and fisheries are rising sea levels which includes increased shoreline erosion and frequent inundations. A subtle but dangerous pattern is also the increasing acidification of the oceans as they absorb surplus carbon dioxide (see Marine Climate issues). Changes in weather patterns are leading to powerful and frequent storms and typhoons and changes in the rainfall patterns. Other consequences include the spread of invasive species and marine diseases, the destruction of habitat such as mangroves, sea grass beds, salt marshes and coral reefs. The decline in abalone and other molluscs in shallow coastal water in South Korea has deprived coastal fisherwomen of income. It also increases their vulnerability as they are forced into deep waters to collect the shellfish. Sri Lanka is faced with a similar problem with the decreasing quantity of sea cucumber in shallow water.

Secondary impacts are regional conflicts caused by declining fish catch, destruction of mangrove forests and disappearance of sea grass beds. Further impacts are the decline of coastal water quality and the abundance and diversity of fish catch through urban waste water which is released into the coastal ecosystem. A consequence of the changing water quality is the rapid increase of unknown fish species.

The group proposed a mitigation strategy to reduce the emission of CO₂, which is the primary driver behind the changes. The measures should include policy development, regulations, awareness and education, proper coordination among different stakeholders and comprehensive and long term research. Moreover, to decrease the

impacts, human stressors such as over fishing and land based pollution must be reduced. Ideas here were for a restocking program, prevention of the exploitation of new fishery development areas, ending government fuel and boat subsidies and tax exemptions for the fishing sector. Other policy level mitigation strategies include the implementation of UNFSA and FAO Code of Conduct, as well as the establishment of implementation strategies for ecosystem-based management of fisheries and enforced quotas. Furthermore, the support of market-driven sustainable and climate-proof practices in the sea food industry through public awareness are needed. A holistic approach to coastal and off-shore development could be supported through integrated aquaculture projects and marine spatial planning strategies. Also, the use of native species in all aquaculture projects is needed to prevent accidental introduction of invasive species.

In terms of adaptation, the groups suggested identification of vulnerable areas in the coastal regions, and preparation of vulnerability maps and evacuation plans. Thus, infrastructural development should be directed to less vulnerable areas and climate change impact predictions should be integrated into new development activities. The group expressed the need for support of education and training programs that develop sustainable, alternative livelihoods for individuals involved in the fishing industry.

Marine Climate Issues: ocean acidification and reef deterioration

Local problems for the ocean are plastic pollution, chemicals and effluents from industries. For island states such as Sri Lanka, marine climate change and biodiversity issues are critically important. Over-fishing by trawlers, change in fishing technologies and climate related changes such as

reef death, over-heating of water, coastal erosion and declining fish stocks are key challenges. Moreover, changes are reported in species and currents in the sea. Coral reefs are particularly vulnerable and are affected by changes in ocean temperature, acidification, and strong surges, as well as poorly managed tourism. The scale of climate change is so far advanced that it is unlikely to be able to save coral reefs. Other consequences are rising sea levels, greater sea surges and surf that are washing away the shoreline, causing salt to be increasingly found on land and in drinking water, rice paddies and other essential areas of human livelihood.

According to Dr. Nigel Crawhall, changes in the ocean's surface temperature (warming some areas, cooling and changing salinity where there are massive ice melts) changes the weather across the planet. Global warming and acidification is causing massive death of coral and marine species distribution. This divergence of heating and cooling in different parts of the oceans, causes more severe storms and weather patterns, shifts in monsoon patterns, tornado frequencies, patterns of hurricanes and cyclones due to disturbances of the sea and air currents. Worldwide ocean acidification is dangerous and unstoppable as long as there is excessive CO₂ in the atmosphere. The tipping point will result in reduction in complexity and abundance of life forms, resulting in the extinction of marine life and removal of marine resources from the human food chain and livelihoods, casting as many as three billion people into a crisis of food insecurity².

The focal priorities of this working group include the importance of lagoons for the ecosystem and ocean biodiversity, which in Sri Lanka have been poorly conserved. Lagoons may be an important way in which coastal fishing communities can help conserve fish stocks and food security even where the ocean's biodiversity is in decline. Preservation

of lagoons should be a priority for Asian countries as part of biodiversity conservation, food security and climate adaptation.

People need to be educated about long term processes in order to enable civil society and government to respond to the process. Mitigation to decrease GHG emissions and adaptations in order to cope with the threats are also high priorities. For both priorities, religious leaders play an important role, because they are the focus of community education, planning information sharing and moral encouragement. Adaptations need to include ecosystem conservation, public education, the use of traditional and local knowledge for natural resource governance, science, and buffering against risks and vulnerability, while developing alternative livelihoods and disaster risk reduction.

Religious leaders have a major role to play in challenging the morality of parties and elites. Furthermore, they are able to guide our transformation of mindfulness and behaviour regarding nature and creation through connections to their faith scriptures. Concerning adaptation, civil society needs to promote good models of conservation and sustainability alongside personal changes. Inter-generational partnerships will be important to increase skills for youth, sharing of traditional, local and scientific knowledge and moral solidarity between the generations.



² http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/marine/marine_resources/?7481/Ocean-acidification---Making-it-clear

THREE PARALLEL SESSIONS ON ENERGY AND DISASTERS

Facilitators: Dr. Vishaka Hidellage (Practical Action, Sri Lanka), Emilie Parry (Sustainable Transformation, USA), Jonathan Watts (Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists)

Fossil Fuels and Renewable Energy

Input on this topic was given by Mr. Asoka Abayagunawardana, deepening the exploration on fossil fuels that was touched upon during the opening presentations. The focus on renewable energies as a solution also looked at hindrances to their wide adoption by governments around the world. There has been a rapid increase in the technological development of renewable energies, and within the region, the most important forms of renewable energies are solar, while wind power and biogas are also highly relevant. Yet the uptake of these renewable sources into policy has been limited, often due to unfavourable power pricing, through other non-renewable forms of energy that do not reflect their true costs. Nuclear energy was also discussed, as many governments list it as green energy, a statement disputed by the participants.

Messages for policy makers included enabling subsidies for renewable energy, along with policy to ensure finances are made available to furnish upfront costs of renewable energies. The question was also raised how positive influence of religious leaders can be used to promote just climate policies. At the community level, there remain gaps in the dissemination of knowledge on renewable energies, leaving many dependent on the import of technologies, rather than developing their own plans for energy sustainability independently. The final key message from the

group was not to wait for the West to solve problems related to energy and climate change; action needs to start now across Asia in policy and practice.

Climate Disasters and Relief

The group on climate disaster and relief noted the rising frequency of climate disasters such as floods, droughts and cyclones across the region. Experience of recent disasters within the region and beyond pointed to a lack of government investment in preparedness, and a tendency to wait for disasters to happen. And while international mechanisms for disaster relief are functioning, there are many negative impacts that humanitarian aid agencies are causing to local communities, through not utilizing local knowledge and existing community mechanisms, including religious organizations.

Key solutions discussed centred on the fundamental need for a paradigm shift in the way relief operations are conducted. The international humanitarian community and governments have a fundamental responsibility to listen to civil society. More communication, more listening and more cooperation across different levels of society is necessary. In order to prepare for climate and related disasters, it is crucial to draw on local knowledge from indigenous and existing traditions and values. Furthermore, faith values need to be reflected on and common values of all religions need to be highlighted to help each other in times of disaster.

Nuclear Power

Framing this discussion was the recognition that the drivers for over-exploitation of fossil fuel are the same as the drivers that are fuelling the growing usage of nuclear power and causing large-scale threats to life. The major example discussed was

the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, presented by Reverend Hidehito Okochi, who described the structural inequities and lies of nuclear safety that have led to disproportionate impacts on vulnerable sectors of society. The Japanese government has used different strategies over decades to buy off public opinion with subsidies to local communities that host nuclear facilities and nationwide miseducation campaigns, especially in public school education, which in turn have stifled any kind of counter movements by local and national civil society groups. After the Fukushima disaster, the participation of civil society in protest has increased. Various religious groups are involved in addressing the issue of nuclear power plants, although not in great numbers.

An anti-nuclear movement also exists in India, including indigenous communities affected by nuclear plants which also affect their socio-economic situation. Due to the effects of the Indian nuclear programs on Sri Lanka due to its proximity, Sri Lankan groups also addressed the issue. This discussion also helped to network activists in both countries to develop campaign

opportunities on cross-country nuclear issues.

In terms of solutions, media plays a vital role in sharing clear information on nuclear power. While mainstream media does not report so much on nuclear disasters and the dangers of nuclear energy, there are opportunities in Japan to develop alternative media in order to inform about nuclear energy to the wider public. The parameters to assess impacts of nuclear power plants also need to be reconsidered in order to include the situation of local communities affected by the plant.

Lastly, there is a great need for religious communities and religious leaders to address the issue why we actually need - or do not need - nuclear power plants. Currently, a materialistic attitude towards the extensive use of energy is very common and energy consumption is on the rise, without any discussion on the problems that are caused by nuclear power plants, especially by academics and scientists. By realigning values, religious leaders have a key role to play in challenging the exploitation and over-consumption of energy.



Religion, Faith and Nature

Keynote Speaker: Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, Founder of Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement

The current crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are driven by human behaviour, and reflect our inner values and understanding of our responsibility for the living world and our connection to other life forms. This session aimed to explore the relationships between humans and the living world through different faith perspectives, and what roles and responsibilities faith communities have in engaging with climate change.

Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder and director of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, which he established 51 years ago, began the session. The organization is the largest civil society movement in Sri Lanka, working in 15,000 villages across the country. It is based on Buddhist and Gandhian principles - Sarvodaya in Sanskrit means "awakening of all" and Shramadana "to donate effort." Dr. Ariyaratne is one of the founding visionaries of practicing religion in society, inspiring activists around the world, including INEB and Sewalanka.

Dr. Ariyaratne explored the lessons learned from his work with Sarvodaya as an organisation inspired by spiritual teachings, and where change needs to be effected in modern society in order to meet the challenges of climate change and all its interconnections with broader systems of injustice. His vision of change is rooted in the values of non-violence and respect for legal systems. Sri Lanka has suffered from 30 years of civil war, where experience speaks that once violence starts, it is very difficult to stop.

Awakening consciousness - there is a pressing need for religious leaders to transcend beyond the labels of religion, to forget whatever outward

differences they have - by their practices, rituals, places of worship - and connect to the spirituality within us all. This means leaving behind greed - sensual, money, power, fame - which necessarily lead to negative emotions, that contribute to the state of the world today. Cultivating love in our hearts is the most important factor in changing our consciousness, and our relationships with the world around us.

"unless we wake up humanity to a spiritual level, none of these things we are talking about can be implemented"

A.T. Ariyaratne



Changing power systems - there needs to be a major shift of power from representative democracy to peoples' participatory democracy. The 21st century is supposed to be governed by democratic principles but though we utter the word democracy, it is hardly seen in action in most societies in the world. Representative democracy has given power from individuals to representatives, who are often co-opted or at worst, subsumed by power and greed. We need to think of ways and means to bring the system of power back down to the level of people, not only provincial or state levels. Recent peoples' movements in the Middle East and the USA are illustrating peoples' desire towards this model.

Changing the economic system - Directly related to power systems is the interplay with the dominant economic system. Money systems are rooted in wrong views about our relationship with the world around us, especially the finite nature of resources, and our interdependence on ecological systems for survival. The present economic system is also dependant on banks, and recent crises have

shown their inherent dysfunctional and unstable characteristics. Taxpayer bailouts and austerity measures to stem the chaos reflect that it is small people who are supporting the banks. Yet fair banking systems do exist. Sarvodaya has set up a village level banking system with profit being directly controlled by villagers themselves. Equitable models such as these need to show the way forward into how money can be handled in society.

Within the context of climate change, Dr. Ariyaratne was clear to reject the mimicking of western lifestyles as a solution, but rather to explore existing practices across the Asian region which have relied on understanding the environment around us and utilising natural processes sustainably for comfortable living. Put simply, his vision relies on a simple lifestyle where our needs for a clean and beautiful environment, an adequate supply of clean water, simple and appropriate housing, are provided by systems that are under our direct control.



Theology of Life

Panel Speakers: Venerable Olande Ananda (Buddhist), K.C. Swarnaraj (Baha'i), Rev. Father Anura Perera (Christian), Venerable Sanghasaena (Buddhist), Vedda Chief, Uruwarige Wannila Aththo (Animist), Dr. Ali Agus (Muslim), Choi Kwangsoo (Buddhist), Rev. Jegatheesan Kurukkal (Hindu), Tran Thi Lanh (Animist). Moderator: Jonathan Watts (JNEB)

A panel session from leaders across faiths and traditions: Animist, Hindu, Christian, Baha'i, Muslim, and Buddhist, explored teachings about the relationship between humans, the divine, and the living world. Throughout the presentations, there was a clear common thread among all faiths and traditions that tells of the intrinsic interconnectedness between people and nature, which rely on each other to sustain life. Each tradition also prescribes clear directions towards a correct way of living in harmony with the world around us, through a reverence for life in all forms.

Within the Hindu tradition, the teachings focus on the control of desire, primarily through limiting usage and returning in kind what is taken, to ensure resources are not depleted. To take without giving back is to destabilise the laws of nature. This prescient teaching is claimed to be 6,000 years old. Baha'i teachings stress the role of humans in ensuring a balance among the different kingdoms. Waste can be viewed as a criminal offence because of its role in upsetting the balance between nature and beings. Animist traditions also illustrate worldviews rooted in connections with nature, where any destruction of the environment is also destruction of life, because of the non-separation of humans, the 'divine' and nature.

"Everyone and everything is our neighbour because we live in an interdependent world.

When you love your neighbour, you protect them".

*Rev. Father Anura Perera
(Inter-religious Peace Foundation, Sri Lanka)*

The faith leaders and representatives acknowledged the important role they and their communities must play in leading the way to addressing climate issues. The drivers of climate change are foremost human, rooted in materialist values and behaviours. Yet global political solutions to climate change arise from the same set of values that are causing it, which are devoid of any moral or spiritual inquiry.

The clear message given by all represented traditions and faiths and that of Dr. Ariyaratne is that establishing a sustainable pattern of living on this earth will depend on the extent to which we are willing to transform ourselves, and respect the interconnectedness of all life on Earth. Through opening ourselves to the suffering being wrought - and to be wrought - by climate change, we can cultivate compassion, from which springs new ways of thinking about the world, and how we should act within it. The exploration of faith-based teachings on the shared love and respect of nature can provide insights to help guide this process among faith communities across Asia.



Faith and the interwoven web of life

All faiths represented at the conference pointed to teachings and traditions of stewardship and interconnectedness with the living world.

Buddhism: In the *Agamas Sutras*, the Buddha said that the planting of trees create shade for others, and merit for oneself. In Section Five of the *Vinaya-matrka-satra*, it reads, “A *bhiksu* who plants three kinds of trees in honour of the Triple Gem—a fruit tree, a flowering tree, and a leafy tree—cultivates blessings and is not committing wrong”. Planting trees not only beautifies the environment, it is also a form of practice. Throughout history, Buddhist temples and monasteries have followed the Buddha’s teachings by planting trees, growing flowers, and caring for the great earth”³

Christianity: If we are to be good stewards of Earth, there is a foundational reverence we need to bear toward all of life for its own sake, because it is God’s creation and it is filled with God’s glory. Fundamental to such an exercise of stewardship is the experience of oneness with the Earth-community we serve. God’s covenant with Noah and all creation affirms that all living creatures are in solidarity with each other in covenant with God (Gen 9:8-17; Hos 2:18). This experience of creation’s oneness is affirmed by the admonitions throughout Scripture for all creation to worship God: “*Let the sea roar and all that fills it; let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy*” (1 Chr 16:29-34). We are in solidarity with all creation; and if we do not care for Earth-community, the whole creation will not be able to celebrate together in praise of our creator.⁴

Hinduism: Hindus believe that humans, gods and nature were integral parts of one ‘organic whole’. Ancient Hindu writers, later on, personified each part of the divine force as a Devata or deity worthy of reverence and worship. Even Charvaka, the atheist philosopher of ancient India, who totally rejected Vedas, the Hindu scriptures, considered the principles of Vayu (air) Bhumi (earth), Jala (water), Agni (fire) as important factors in regulating the lives of humans, animals and plants. This Hindu worldview of ancient Vedic times became formalized into the Samkhya system of philosophy that promoted ecology-care in Hindu attitude.⁵

Bahá’ism: Bahá’ís believe unity should also characterize the relationship between humanity and the natural environment created by an all-powerful God. In the words of Bahá’u’lláh, “*Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch.*” From the Bahá’í perspective, humanity is both physically and metaphorically linked to the world. In a letter written in 1933, Shoghi Effendi, a direct descendant of

Bahá’u’lláh and known as the Guardian of the Bahá’í Faith wrote:

3 <http://www.blia.org/english/publications/booklet/pages/33.htm>

4 <http://www.webofcreation.org/archive-of-resources/505-stewardship-of-creation>

5 <http://www.boloji.com/index.cfm?md=Content&sd=Articles&ArticleID=3634>

“We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it”.

The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.⁶

Animism: Animistic belief in the soul is not confined to the human soul, but is transferred onto objects in nature that are seen to control or at least influence the natural operation of the world around them. This translates into an elaborate moral ecology underpinning local resource use and human-environment relations.⁷

*“As we live in the forest, we are respectful of the environment. When we farm, we don’t disturb the trees. We maintain the watersheds around springs. When we hunt, we never kill the females. When we need timber, we cut the branch, not the tree. We are rooted in these values, and we instil them in our children. We live **with** the environment, not in competition with it”* - Veddha chief Uruwarige Wannila Aththo.

Islam: In the Quran, God identifies nature as a tapestry of signs for man to reflect upon his existence, just as the verses within the Quran are also considered signs, sharing the same Arabic word, *ayat*. This relationship is further deepened by many chapters within the Quran that take the name of natural phenomenon such as the bee, the fig, the light, and so on. This makes the conversation between nature and scripture explicit. Going further than contemplation of the universe, in Islam mankind is the vice-regent of God on Earth, entrusting humanity with the duty to protect and restore balance in the environment

and to protect the signs for future generations to enjoy⁸. The Qur’an is explicit that man is *Khalifa*; he is a steward of almighty Allah’s wondrous creation and abundance. He should know that he is blessed with such a world, and respect his place within this context and trust that has been placed in him to conserve for coming generations and in honour of God’s generosity.

“Assuredly the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater than the creation of mankind: Yet most men understand not.” - Holy Qur’an 40:57



⁶ http://www.bahai-library.com/landau_bahai_faith_environment

⁷ <http://southasianpeoples.imb.org/explore/religions/animism/>

⁸ <http://www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org/2012/04/green-muslims-eco-islam-and-evolving-climate-change-consciousness/>

Political Experiences

Keynote Speakers: Shamen Vidanage (IUCN Sri Lanka), Dr. Ghana Gurung (WWF, Nepal), Sombath Somphone (PADETC, Laos), Harsha Navaratne (Sewalanka Foundation, Sri Lanka), Caroline Wambui Kiiru (Kenya Youth Climate Network). Moderator: Nigel Crawhall (IUCN, CEESP, South Africa)

A panel presentation was given by representatives from inter-governmental bodies, conservation NGO's, social justice activists, and youth networks, to provide different angles and experiences on how they see the political problems hindering a binding global agreement, and how to bring clarity into discussions which will ensure the future for the coming generations. Key issues discussed formed around the following questions:

- Why can we not get a globally binding agreement on climate change and conservation?
- What can we do to bring about a change in policy, behaviour and accountability?
- Where strategically should we be focusing our energy?

Dr. Nigel Crawhall chaired the discussion, providing an introduction to the stalemate situation on an international binding agreement, with Kyoto Protocol expiring and a breakdown in negotiations leading to a crisis situation where there is currently no global agreement in place to control GHG emissions - which are increasing radically now.

The causes of this failure of political negotiations while it is so much in our interests to find an agreement were explored by Shamen Vidanage of IUCN, who touched upon key issues of tension between agreement mechanisms which are State-

based - and often seen as instruments of the West to unfairly protect their interests - whereas climate change is a global commons problem which requires a global response. While the West needs to take responsibility for what has happened, Developing countries need to take action now, ensuring they do not repeat actions that have brought us to this critical juncture. The role of civil society was suggested to focus on preparing national delegations on the scientific and moral imperative of climate change. Here the voice of the religious community should have a key role to play in influencing political leaders to move beyond personal interests and awaken to the suffering which climate change is causing now, and in the future.

Another form of influence on political leaders was shared from the experience of Caroline Wambui Kiiru from the Kenyan Youth Climate Network. Her experience brought clearly into the discussion the important role youth have to play in determining the direction of negotiations, from their standpoint of being the inheritors of climate change actions today. The Kenyan inter-faith youth network initiated a Caravan that travelled from Nairobi to Durban to coincide with the COP17 round of negotiations. The caravan spread the message of climate change along its journey southwards, creating workshops and impromptu sharing among communities they travelled through, connecting with youth networks and building

awareness and synergy for action across the region. Despite facing many criticisms and doubts that they wouldn't succeed, the Caravan arrived in Durban to an emotional welcome that expressed the heartfelt respect for the determination and commitment of the Caravan, and the need to seriously include the voice of youth in discussions on climate change.

“Act-vocacy and Advocacy” *slogan of the Kenya Interfaith Youth Network*

Sombath Somphone also echoed the moral imperative for young people to be involved in designing their own futures. Strengthening all levels of civil society - including youth - is a vital step towards advocacy influence at a political level, while also providing the impetus for change in behaviours and actions. The integration of awareness of climate change and its human drivers into educational curriculums and faith sermons will be crucial to ensure that civil society can challenge consumption patterns and their underlying values of greed and desire.

“We have been saying that young people are the future, but we never give them the present. Let them design their future.”

Sombath Somphone

As a representative who has taken part in many international negotiation rounds, Dr. Ghana Gurung of WWF provided a broad overview of challenges and solutions. At a political level, he emphasised that in order to counter the collusion of powerhouse countries (who are the greatest contributors of GHG emissions) during international negotiations, vulnerable countries must join with a common voice to ensure equitable representation within a consensus-driven process. In order to achieve this, a two-fold approach of working with political leaders and representatives is crucial in parallel with advocacy efforts to pressure from civil society.

According to Dr. Gurung, at a social level every sector needs to mainstream climate change, especially the education system which has not yet done so in many Asian countries. Sustainability – nature's capacity to recuperate and replenish its resources - has to be the foundational value to guiding the actions and behaviours of all social sectors and all people, with a paradigmatic change in consumption patterns across the globe.

At a personal level, Harsha Navaratne underscored the human-driven root causes of climate change, sharing an example from his own life experience that highlighted the urgent need to start with ourselves and change our own value systems.

“Unless we change our own value systems, we can't expect others to”.

Harsha Kumara Navaratne

These presentations provided a contextual picture of the socio-political challenges facing having binding climate change agreements in place, while also reminding us of the actions at social and personal levels that are crucial for averting a climate change crisis. Structural changes are needed so we can mitigate impacts now, while value changes will ensure a pathway of sustainability rooted in compassion and a deep awareness of the interconnectedness of humans and nature.

Key Messages from Speakers

Political Level

- International-level negotiations have to be consensus-based, with equitable representation of all States.
- Voluntary reductions are vital while there is no binding agreement on GHG emissions
- Civil Society, especially religious leaders

and scientists / conservationists must actively engage in advocating on climate change issues to influence political leaders both in the science of climate change and the moral imperative.

Social Level

- Civil society must be strengthened through education and mainstreaming of climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies into all sectors of society.
- The voice of youth is filled with optimism, energy and enthusiasm, and guided by a

vision of the future. Youth involvement needs to be encouraged, and given space to direct actions now, in order for them to inherit a world they would want to live in.

Personal Level

- We all have to transform ourselves by awakening our minds. When compassion is awake to the suffering of others, we are capable of great things. All minds of all beings have this capacity, to have inspiration to move beyond our limited self-interest and act with the wellbeing of others as our motivation.



Faith in Action

Group work by all participants

As a platform for networking and collaboration, the conference was designed to move beyond discussion and into action. An interactive process facilitated participants to co-create the direction of roadmaps, drawing upon the key areas they identified for action that were drawn out from the conference.

This process formed over two sessions of working group discussions; the first session drawing out key themes, and the second session exploring what form of collaborative actions are possible. While there were time limitations in forming detailed timeframes and responsibilities, the outcomes will be used as a framework for actions to be taken forward and implemented.

One of the themes identified was the institutionalisation of an interfaith climate change network, which will provide a foundational body from which the proposed actions will develop and be taken forward in concrete steps. Named the Inter-religious Climate and Ecology Network, or ICE Network, it will function as a platform for communication, resource sharing and collaborative actions primarily through an online website mechanism, and will be coordinated by the INEB Secretariat Office.

Below are the six thematic areas identified and their scope of actions, as explored by the conference participants. These frameworks will help guide comprehensive action plans through the ICE Network:

1. Education: *public awareness of climate change, biodiversity, ecology and social justice, training for clergy and lay people as change agents*

- Integration of indigenous wisdom and traditional community practices with climate change science
- Sharing local values from local to regional to international levels
- Build up stories, curricula, and media from traditional practices and wisdom
- Networking across indigenous and educational organizations and networks at national, regional and international levels
- Exposure of religious leaders, policy makers to indigenous communities
- Integration of climate change education into formal education at all levels
- Set up mechanism to address policy makers and politicians



2. Advocacy: *national training on advocacy methods, opportunities, and processes related to climate change and the environment within a framework of social justice; specialised training on international advocacy*

- Explore stakeholders regarding climate change issues: lawyers, politicians, media groups, indigenous people, farmers, fisher people, religious leaders, parent and teacher associations, women's groups, youth groups, scientists, business leaders, NGO, CBO and community leaders
- Capacity building for stakeholders
 - ▶ Environmental law, policy justice trainings - politicians, media and lawyers
 - ▶ Change agents training on campaigning and advocating - indigenous people, religious leaders, parents and teachers, women's groups
 - ▶ Exchange and exposure among countries
 - ▶ CSR – company and business groups
 - ▶ Skill training on gender, social impact and environmental impact assessments - scientists, NGO's and CBO's
 - ▶ Training on international negotiations
- Campaigns - culture and tradition
- Advocacy - COP 18 and 19 advocacy sessions, negotiations at international level, especially greater Mekong region and ASEAN
- National level forum on climate change
- Research, mapping and documentation
- Monitoring of international financial institutions

3. Personal change and eco-ethics: *religious and inter-religious actions and awareness on personal change*

- Personal commitments to lower carbon emissions
- Consciousness of interconnections of self and nature
- Utilisation of power of choice in terms of support for religious institutions and their ethical position and action on climate change
- Strengthen relationships among climate change actors for longer term partnerships in action and solidarity
- A declaration among the ICE network as an outcome of the conference

4. Religious institutional change and eco-ethics: *changing the carbon footprints or environmental impacts of religious institutions, modelling behaviour and change institutions*

- Temples (religious institutions) as sites of good practice:
 - ▶ Clean energy
 - ▶ Greening temple spaces
- Network among religious temples with coordination mechanism at international level
- Online media networking mechanism
- Integration of climate change and biodiversity loss into religious teachings (this isn't mentioned by the group)

5. Community change and modelling: *Modelling eco-villages, organic and ecological small scale farming, artisanal fisheries, local ecosystem conservation, urban gardening, food security projects, indigenous knowledge systems support,*

community forestry

- Promoting networking among sustainability groups, youth and religious institutions
- Defining sustainable local practices and modelling them across the network
- Awareness and education through:
 - ▶ Curriculum (school-based) and training programmes
 - ▶ Religious Leader empowerment
 - ▶ Campaigns
 - ▶ Action research

6. Institutionalisation of the network: *Media, websites, social networking media, sharing campaign, cross-Asian testimonies, building organisational capacity*

- Development of a network as a concrete outcome of the conference, open to all climate change advocates (known as ICE Network)
- Development of website as a platform to take the network's activities forward:

- ▶ Umbrella space for all ideas
- ▶ Sharing of wisdom, local indigenous practices
- ▶ Place for educational resources, research and publications, worldwide mapping of climate impacts and actions
- ▶ Discussion blackboard
- Other social media mechanisms
- Support for music as a channel for awareness on climate change
- Events such as book fairs, zero waste fairs, film festivals for public awareness and integration into media
- Networking and reconnecting:
 - ▶ COP 18 and 19 reconnecting and learning exchange
 - ▶ INEB bi-annual conference in Malaysia 2013
 - ▶ Online conferences



A View from the Democracy Wall

The Democracy Wall captured comments by participants, expressed ideas, feelings and suggestions which were important for them. It helped to create a picture of the impact of the conference on participants and ideas to be taken forward by the network. These comments included:

I learned that...

- Grassroots communities trust religious leaders and would be likely to learn science from religious leaders. They can teach us how to survive in the era of climate change.
- Fossil carbon and biotic carbon cannot be seen as equivalents; we have no option but to stop the use of fossil fuels as soon as possible.
- We are the trustees of our environment not the owners. It is our duty to safeguard this environment, its resources, especially the water, rivers, lakes, oceans, watersheds, wetlands, because water is the spring of life.
- If we do not address the use of toxic energy sources, we will not be able to stabilise the atmosphere and our ecosystem's health...
- Common but differentiated responsibility taken seriously, would resolve the climate crisis.
- All religions talk about the environment and our duty to safeguard it.
- Many people still need to learn a lot about climate change.

I felt...

- Optimistic that people from different countries and religions can work well

together, listen and have compassion for each other - this is the antidote!

- Happy to share faith and religious wisdom - there is goodwill here at Islander Center
- Inspired by Dr. Ariyaratne and Ven. Sanghasaena who said that our mission is to change the human mind and love the earth and sentient beings - with faith all is possible.

I noted that...

- We need to listen to our elders and build on their wisdom with our current knowledge
- We need to reflect as individuals, who we represent and how our actions affect the future of our people, their neighbours and life.
- To bring about change, we need to promote awareness at the national level, in the civil service, at district and village levels.
- Faith leaders are already involved in community life - they can help with adaptation and changing values and behaviours
- In Asia, we have accepted the Western idea of separation of Church and State. Does this make sense in terms of holistic governance and morality in politics?

- We need biological and genetic corridors to protect life. We need information, knowledge and wisdom corridors to nourish human life.
- Faith leaders need to lead on climate mitigation. They can speak truth to power – urgently.
- There is no way man can control nature. We need to understand the nature as we human beings are part of it. Policy should take this into consideration.
- We work towards an inter-faith declaration on climate and environment, and get it signed by all of us.
- We include policy makers who are currently in office and those who will be, to join dialogues such as this, as most of them attend a religious institution.
- We create a website inviting all attendees to join, and others walking this path, to share, including the space to connect, share resources, develop lobbying and advocacy points, and involve youth.

I recommend that...

- Gender safeguards be built to ensure protection of especially womens' rights in climate change.
- If the UNFCCC COP19 will be in Korea, then the Korean members should be supported to host religious-affiliated leaders and organisations.





Schedule

STUDY VISITS: 23-24 September 2012	
	Group One Study visit to Mannar
	Group Two Study visit to Vavuniya
CONFERENCE: 25 September 2012: DAY 1 DEFINING THE ISSUE	
06.30-07.30	Meditation / Yoga / Prayers
06.00-07.30	Morning Tea
07.30-08.30	Breakfast
	CONFERENCE OPENING
	Opening prayer and lamp ceremony
	Welcome by Mr. Harsha Navaratne, Chairman of Sewalanka Foundation and Chairperson of INEB Executive Committee
	Welcome II by Lodi Gyari Rinpoche, former envoy for HH Dalai Lama in Washington D.C.
8:30-10:15	PLENARY
	Faith, Science, Social Justice and Transformation – achieving a just, equitable and sustainable world in our lifetime; Opening Messages from Religious Leaders, Moderator: Dr. Nigel Crawhall (IUCN CEESP, South Africa)
	Key Note Address: Beyond the Current Understanding of Climate Change & Biodiversity
	Dr. Ranil Senanayake (Chair, Rainforest Rescue International, Sri Lanka)
10:15-10:30	Tea Break
	SCIENCE INTRODUCTION
	Science of climate change and biodiversity loss
10:30-11:50	Key Note Address: What are the causes of climate change?
	Dr. Ghana Gurung (WWF Nepal)
	Key Note Address: What are the main drivers of biodiversity loss?
	Prof. Dewaka Weerakoon (IUCN and University of Colombo, Sri Lanka)
11:50-13:30	Lunch Break & Prayer
13:30-15:00	THREE PARALLEL SESSIONS ON ECOSYSTEMS
	a. Mountain Ecosystems b. Plains and Agriculture c. Marine and Coastal Changes
15:00 – 15:30	Tea Break
15.30-17.00	THREE PARALLEL SESSIONS ON ENERGY AND DISASTERS
	a. Fossil Fuels and Renewable Energy b. Climate Disaster and Relief
	c. Nuclear Power
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner
26 September 2012: DAY 2 THE ROLE OF RELIGION	
06.30-07.30	Meditation / Yoga (Optional) / Prayer / Morning Tea
07.30-08.30	Breakfast

06.30-07.30	Morning Tea
8:30-8:45	Faith-based opening of the day (Islamic opening message & prayer)
8:45-9:30	Reports Back to Plenary from Parallel Working Groups
	RELIGION, FAITH, AND NATURE
9:30-10:15	Keynote Address: Our Human Impact on the World – faith and responsibilities Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne (Sarvodaya Movement, Sri Lanka)
10:15 – 10:30	Tea Break
10:30-11:50	Panel Discussion: Theology of Life Venerable Olande Ananda (Buddhist), K.C. Swarnaraj (Baha'i), Rev. Father Anura Perera (Christian), Venerable Sanghasaena (Buddhist), Vedda Chief, Uruwarige Wannila Aththo (Animist), Dr. Ali Agus (Muslim), Choi Kwangsoo (Buddhist), Rev. Jegatheesan Kurukkal (Hindu), Tran Thi Lanh (Animist). Moderator: Jonathon Watts (JNEB)
11:50 – 13:30	Lunch Break & Prayer
13:30-15:00	THE POLITICAL OF CLIMATE CHANGE Panel Discussion: The Political Problem & Solutions Shamen Vidanage (IUCN Sri Lanka), Dr. Ghana Gurung (WWF Nepal), Sombath Somphone (PADETC, Laos), Harsha Navaratne (Sewalanka Foundation, Sri Lanka), Caroline Wambui Kiiru (Kenya Youth Climate Network). Moderator: Nigel Crawhall (IUCN, CEESP, South Africa)
15:00 – 15:30	Tea Break
15:30 – 17:00	WORKING GROUPS
	Faith in life, faith in action
19:00 – 20:00	Dinner
20:00 – 22:00	Cultural Show
27 September 2012: DAY 3 SETTING AGENDAS/ COMMITTING TO ACTIONS	
06.30-07.30	Meditation / Yoga (Optional) / Prayer
06.30-07.30	Morning Tea
07.30-08.30	Breakfast
08:30-08:45	Faith - based opening of the day (Christian message and opening prayer)
8:45-10:15	WORKING GROUPS
	Working together on the road map
10:15 – 10:30	Tea Break
	PLENARY
10:30-11:45	Working Groups report back to Plenary Multi-religious closing prayers, blessings and messages
11:50 – 13:30	Lunch Break & Prayer
13:30-15:00	AFTERNOON SESSION
	Informal networking & walks around Islander Center

Participating Organization

Country	Organization
AUSTRIA	Strategic Leadership towards Sustainable Development
BANGLADESH	Bangladesh Association for Sustainable Development (BASD)
CAMBODIA	The NGO Forum on Cambodia
	Oddar Meanchey
	American Friends Service Committee
	Mlup Baitong
	Buddhist Association for Environmental Development
	Dhammayietra
CHINA	China University of Political Science and Law
HUNGARY	Strategic Leadership towards Sustainable Development
INDIA	Youth Buddhist Society of India
	Mahabodhi International Meditation Center
	GAIA
	Zero Waste, Thanal
	Foundation of His Sacred Majesty
	Fo Guang Shan - Delhi
	Deer Park Institute
	Sacred Earth Trust
	Mahabodhi International Center, Ladakh
	AV India Group
	Fireflies Intercultural Centre
INDONESIA	Islamic Forum
	Solidalitas Perempuan
	Universitas Pararra
	Community Empowerment Council of Central Board of Muhammadiyah
JAPAN	Global Ecovillage Network in Oceania and Asia
	Juko-in Temple
	Edogawa Citizen's Network for Thinking about Global Warming (ECNG)
	Niwano Peace Foundation
	Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists
KENYA	Kenya Youth Climate Network
LAOS	Participatory Development Training Center
	Love Natural Resources Association
	Lao Buddhism for Development
MALAYSIA	Wayang Alternative Media
MYANMAR	Naytha Monastery
	Water, Research and Training Centre (WRTC)
	Asia Light Foundation
	Gaia Sustainable Management Institute
	Myanmar Resource Foundation
	Alein Eing Christian Media
	Yangon Technological University
	Karen Rural Development Organization
	Socially Engaged Monastic Schools
	Kalayana Mitta Foundation
	Metta Development Foundation
NEPAL	WWF Nepal

Country	Organization
NEW ZEALAND	Waikato University
SOUTH AFRICA	TILCEPA Chair- IUCN
	We Have Faith campaign
	Southern African Faith Communities Environment Institute
	World Future Council Foundation, African office
SOUTH KOREA	Buddhist NGO Coalition of Gwang-Ju, Chunnam
	Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism
	Lotus World
	The Network of Buddhist Civil Society
	Ecobuddha
	The Good Friends
	Lotus World
	Korean Buddhist University Federation
	Namu Counseling Center for Female Rights
	Buddhist Coalition for Economic Justice
SRI LANKA	American Mission – Jaffna and Vavuniya
	Sri Lanka Nature Group
	WICPER - Weeramantry International Centre for Peace Education and Research
	Environment Legal Council
	Centre for Environmental Justice
	Ministry of Power and Energy
	Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources
	Sewalanka Foundation
	Brahma Kumari Trust – Sri Lanka
	Welthungerhilfe – Sri Lanka
	Institute of Tropical Studies and Conservation
	Arthacharya Foundation
	Engaged Buddhists Solidarity for Nature
	Muslim Education Council
	INEB – Sri Lanka
	Anuradhapura Diocese
	Baha'i International - Sri Lanka Branch
	Inter-religious Peace Foundation
	Vavuniya Hindu Temple
	Sarvodaya
	Rainforest Rescue International
	IUCN – Asia
	IUCN – Sri Lanka
	Practical Action – South Asia
	ECO-V
	Ocean University of Sri Lanka
	Ruhunu University
	University of Sri Jayawardenapura
THAILAND	Dhamma Drop Foundation
	INEB – Secretariat Office
	Spirit in Education Movement
	Sathirakoses-Nagapadipa Foundation
	School for Wellbeing- Towards Organic Asia Program
	Global Ecovillage Network in Oceania and Asia
U.S.A.	The Bridge Fund
	Sustainable Transformation
VIETNAM	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute - SPERI

INEB Overview

Establishment

In 1989, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was established in Siam (Thailand) by Sulak Sivaraksa and a group of Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers and social activists. INEB operates as an autonomous organization under the Bangkok-based Sathirakoses-Nagapradeepa Foundation. Over the years the network has expanded to include members, both individuals and organizations, from more than 20

Nature of the Organization

INEB is comprised of distinguished activists, spiritual leaders, and academics representing the major schools of Buddhism, as well as non-Buddhists with shared concerns. INEB's member activities address a variety of issues to serve their own communities. The members also support one another through collaborating on common projects and joint strategic planning for advancing INEB's vision and activities. The Secretariat's office facilitates the flow of information and support by offering programs to fortify members' capacity through joint activities and shared resources. INEB welcomes new partners that will complement and expand the existing network.

Vision and Objectives

1. INEB's comprehensive vision is to develop the perspective and practice of socially engaged Buddhism that:

1. Promotes understanding, cooperation, and networking among inter-Buddhist and inter-religious social action groups

2. Acts as an information resource related to areas of social concern
3. Facilitates conferences, education, and training that supports and strengthens socially active individuals and groups based in Buddhist values and practices

Socially Engaged Buddhism

INEB members and partners are exploring the ways in which Buddhism and social analysis can enrich one another toward solving social problems together. This exploration seeks to develop new social paradigms based on Buddhist concepts and values such as the interdependency and interconnectedness of all beings to create more self-reliant and harmonious communities. This process has been taking place through linking regional and international groups with grassroots realities from which the social issues of concern and engagement have emerged.

Social Issues of Concern and Engagement

INEB's philosophy and practice is based on compassion, social justice, non-violence, and co-existence as revealed by the Buddha. The core mission is to confront and end suffering using analysis and action guided by the Four Noble Truths. Activities focus on the following areas:

- General conferences
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation
- Human rights and social justice
- Alternative education

- Gender & women's empowerment
- Buddhist economics
- Alternative development
- Environment & climate change
- Reform and revival of Buddhist institutions
- Youth and spiritual leadership development
- Buddhist art
- Inter-religious/faith dialogue and collaboration

Media/Public Relations and Publications

INEB maximizes its capacity to communicate effectively to the network through its website where all of its current activities are announced, as well as those of its members and partner organizations. It also has a Facebook site. In addition to the internet, INEB publishes the *Seeds of Peace* three times per year, which critiques modern society as well as proposes options for a more humane and livable world. Other publications include a variety of books and other printed materials.

Participation

Anyone can become a member of INEB, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike, as long as they share an interest in social issues and genuinely want to contribute in the spirit of giving (*dana*) with compassion. Through an annual donation of fifty US dollars (\$50) new members will receive *Seeds of Peace*.

INEB is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose programmes are funded by outside donors and foundations. The Secretariat's office operates solely on the generosity of individuals, groups, organizations and our regional networks. Your donation or *dana* to further INEB's work would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in

becoming a member or making a donation, please contact the Secretariat – secretariat@inebnetwork.org.

INEB General Conference

Over the years INEB has sponsored 16 general international conferences in various locations throughout Asia for its members and other participants interested in our issues of concern and engagement. In 2011, the bi-annual conference was held in Bodhgaya, India, where participants collectively and individually examined the future of Buddhism. The 2013 conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

History of INEB Conferences

The conference was held annually until 1995, since then they have been scheduled every two years

Year	Conference Location
1989	Uthai Thani, Thailand
1990	Suan Mokkh, Surat Thani, Thailand
1991	Buddhamonthon Park, Nakhom Pathom, Thailand
1992	Chiang Mai, Thailand
1993	Ratchaburi, Thailand
1994	Surin, Thailand
1995	Wongsanit Ashram, Nakhorn Nayok, Thailand
1997	Kanchanaburi, Thailand
1999	Colombo, Sri Lanka
2001	Wongsanit Ashram, Nakorn Nayok, Thailand
2003	Seoul, South Korea
2005	Theme - <i>From Suffering to Nirvana</i> , Nagpur, India
2007	Theme - <i>Engaged Buddhism: Social Welfare and Social Change</i> , Taipei, Taiwan
2009	Theme - <i>20th Anniversary of INEB: Festival of Peace and Social Change</i> , Chiang Mai, Thailand
2011	Theme - <i>The Future of Buddhism: From Personal Awakening to Global Transformation</i> , Bodhgaya, India
2013	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)

PATRONS

His Holiness the Dalai Lama	Tibet
Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh	France/Vietnam
Venerable Maha Somchai Kusalacitto	Siam
Venerable Bhikshuni Chao Hwei	Taiwan

HONORARY ADVISORS

Venerable Pomnyum Sunim	South Korea
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Venerable Bhikshuni Wu Yin	Taiwan
Joanna Macy	USA
Kinjiro Niwano	Japan
Rinko Okano	Japan
Urgyen Sangharashita	United Kingdom

ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC)

Name	Organization	Country
Sulak Sivaraksa (Founder Chair)	Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute	Siam
Lodi Gyari Rinpoche (Co-chair)	Nonresident Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Program of Brookings Institute	Tibet/USA
Ven. Phaisan Visalo	Buddhika Network for Buddhism and Society	Siam
Ven. Sangasena	Mahabodhi International Meditation Centre	Ladakh / India
Ven. Sumanalankar	Parbatya Bouddha Mission	Bangladesh
Ven. Bhikkhuni Dhammananda	Songdhammakalyani Monastery	Siam
Ven. Bhikshuni Myeong-beop	Research Institute for Buddhist Woman	South Korea
Ven. Tsering Palmo	Ladakh Nuns Association	Ladakh/India
Rev. Alan Senauke	Clear View Project	USA
Hisashi Nakamura	Ryukoku University	Japan
Hsiang-chou Yo	Lay Buddhist Association	Taiwan
Jamie Cresswell	European Buddhist Union	UK
Jill Jameson	Buddhist Peace Fellowship Australia	Australia
Joan Halifax Roshi	Upaya Institute and Zen Centre	USA
Dharmachari Lokamitra	Jambudvipa Trust	India
Douangdeuane Bounyavong	Buddhism for Development	Laos
Rev. Masazumi Okano	International Buddhist Exchange Center	Japan
Park Gwang-seo	Buddhist Solidarity for Reform	South Korea
Raja Dharmapala	Dharmavedi Institute	Sri Lanka
Stella Tamang	Alternative Traditional Learning and Development Centre	Nepal
Swee-hin Toh	University for Peace	Costa Rica
Thant Lwin Maung	Socially Engaged Monastic Schools	Burma/Myanmar

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EC)

Name	Organization	Country
Harsha Navaratne (Chairperson)	Sewalanka Foundation	Sri Lanka
Vidyananda (KV Soon) (Vice Chairperson)	Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia	Malaysia
Ven. Geshe Dorje Damdul	Tibet House, New Delhi	Tibet / India
Ven. Sithornh Xayavongsone	Buddhism for Development	Laos
Ven. Thanomsing Sukosalo	Dhammadrop Foundation	Siam
Ven. Bhikkhuni Jenkir	Luminary Buddhist Institute	Taiwan
Amanda Kiessel	Sewalanka Foundation	Sri Lanka
Anchalee Kurutach	Buddhist Peace Fellowship	USA
Bobo Lwin	Kalayana Mitta Foundation	Burma/Myanmar
Eddy Setiawan	HIKMAHBUDHI	Indonesia
Hans van Willenswaard	School for wellbeing	Netherlands/Siam
Heesook Lee	Buddhist solidarity for Reform (BSR)	South Korea
Jonathan Watts	Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists	USA/Japan
Lanh Thi Tran	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute	Vietnam
Mangesh Dahiwale	Jambudvipa Trust	India
Matt Weiner	Office of Religious Life, Princeton University	USA
Matteo Pistono	Nekorpa and RIGPA Fellowship	USA
Minyong Lee	Buddhist Solidarity for Reform (BSR)	South Korea
Nan Mya Thida	Pelone Education Development Unit, Taung Galay	Burma/Myanmar
Nigel Crawhall	Theme on Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities, Equity & Protected Areas	South Africa
Otsal Wangdus	Socially Engaged Buddhist of Ladakh	India (Ladakh)
P. Lalidamballe	ADECOM & Navayana Buddhist Society of India	India (Tamilnadu)
Poolchawee Ruangwichatorn	Spirit in Education Movement (SEM)	Siam
Prashant Varma	Deer Park Institute	India
Ros Sotha	Buddhists and Khmer Society Network	Cambodia
Sai Leng Wan	Alternative Education for Social Engagement (AESE)	Burma/Myanmar
Sarom Sek	Maha Ghosananda Foundation	Cambodia
Suresh Chandra Bauddha	Youth Buddhist Society of India (YBS-India)	India
Suresh Jindal	Devki Foundation	India
Tashi Zangmo	Bhutan Nuns' Foundation	Bhutan
Wallapa van Willenswaard	Garden of Fruition – Social Enterprise	Siam

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Somboon Chungprampree	International Network of Engaged Buddhists	Siam
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Patron, Honorary Advisors, Advisory Committee and Executive Committee Name Lists
As at AC/EC Meeting November 9, 2012, Yokohama, Japan

Organisers :

International Network of Engaged Buddhists



Sewalanka Foundation



IUCN Sri Lanka National Office



Commission on Environmental, Economic and
Social Policy (CEESP)



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Ecobuddha



Indigenous Peoples of Africa
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