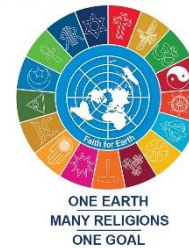




FAITH FOR EARTH



## Faith for Earth

# ENGAGING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO ACHIEVE THE SDGs

UN Strategic Capacity-Building

CONCEPT NOTE

In Collaboration with the UN Task Force on Religion and Development

*Overall Goal:*

*To develop the capacities of United Nations staff and partner faith-based organizations to capitalize on the intrinsic relationship between faith and religious beliefs and environmental sustainability*

## BACKGROUND

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Religion is quite an important driving force that continues to shape and influence the development of all aspects of life. Valuing the role religions plays in the world, Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) must be brought closer to the ongoing discussions on the Environment.

There is a growing recognition in the international community of the fact that religious organizations and faith leaders are critical moral and social agents for the protection of the environment and achieving sustainable development. The resources these organizations bring to the table (human, financial and spiritual) require better appreciation from the international community working on serving the very same communities. In that perspective, UNEP launched the Faith for Earth Initiative in 2017 as an interfaith programme with the aim to strategically engage with faith-based organizations to collectively achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and fulfill the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. 'Faith for Earth' has three main goals: to inspire and empower faith organizations and their leaders to advocate for protecting the environment, to green faith-based organizations' investments and assets to support the implementation of SDGs, and to provide scientific knowledge and networks to enable faith leaders to effectively communicate with decision-makers and the public.

Many of UNEP's regional offices and divisions have initiated partnership agreements with faith-based or faith-inspired service-delivery non-governmental organizations, local faith communities and religious leaders. These actors gathered a wide range of experiences and knowledge, which should be acknowledged as well as shared. This is one of the aims of the present capacity building workshop. The scope of engagement and the challenges inherent in them are not without valid concerns. Moreover, the various means of outreach need to be collectively reviewed and considered.

UNEP regional offices and other UN organizations would be the main interlocutor for reaching out to regionally and locally-based organizations, while divisions' staff would make the linkages at the global strategic level.

The 'Faith for Earth' is adopting the UN Task Force on Religion and Development methodology and approach in conducting this capacity building workshop to bring together a range of UN and UNEP staff and partners who have experience or interest in working with faith-based organizations and/or religious communities focusing on environmental issues and the related SDGs. The workshop is orientated to create synergies and capacities that can empower staff and faith leaders in identifying implementation mechanisms for collaboration.

The method used will be peer-to-peer learning and information sharing, including case studies, previous examples and new approaches. The purpose of the 'Faith for Earth' workshop is to explore existing initiatives and potential ones. It will also consider the priority environmental issues that intersect with religious beliefs, the specific challenges faced in the implementation and best practices while addressing human rights and gender equality as cross-cutting concerns. The 'Faith for Earth' workshop will address issues related to advocacy, service delivery, programme design, implementation and

evaluation. The main outcome is to enhance the ‘how to’ of dealing with, outreach to and partnering with faith-based organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Several key faith-based representatives and resource persons will be invited to reflect on their partnership experiences with diverse UN staff (including policy advisers and Programme Officers). Participants are expected to bring their expertise on the linkages between religion and the environment, focusing on natural resources management, biodiversity conservation, pollution, energy transition, and climate change.

This workshop does not intend to facilitate an interfaith dialogue, but rather an invitation to come together, discuss meaningful joining of efforts and plan in a coordinated manner.

## Principles

- Based on peer-to-peer information and knowledge sharing;
- An activity of the ‘Faith for Earth Initiative’ on Engaging with Faith-Based Organizations for Environmental sustainability. As such, the workshop invites and involves UN and UNEP staff, as well as faith-based partners;
- Representation will aim to be gender, regional and religiously balanced.

## Criteria for Participation

Participants should reflect a balance of the following **criteria**:

- United Nations Environment divisions and offices (regional and global), with experience or interest in working with faith-based and faith-inspired non-governmental organizations (FBOs), and religious institutions, around environmental issues.
- FBOs and officials from religious institutions are already engaged with either the United Nations Environment Programme, and/or regional or national governmental entities/departments in advocacy or service delivery around environmental sustainability.
- All participants are required to prepare and share case studies of partnerships and/or brief descriptions of actual programmes around environmental sustainability, which will be solicited beforehand, per a common template.
- Organizers reserve the right to decide on final participation.

## Objectives Informing Methodology

**Guiding Questions for this peer-to-peer Faith for Earth workshop deliberations will feature the following:**

### *1. What are the linkages between faith and the environment?*

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<sup>1</sup> Taken to include various sizes of faith-based or faith-inspired NGOs delivering services, religious leaders, as well as national, regional and globally-based networks.

*Increased understanding of the linkages between religions and environmental sustainability and the SDGs in contemporary contexts with a view to intergovernmental dynamics (including climate change, community resilience, ecosystem and biodiversity conservation, natural resources management, pollution, energy transition etc.)*

**2. How do these interlinkages manifest in practical development endeavors at the intergovernmental as well as at field-levels?**

*Identification of respective case studies highlighting opportunities and challenges of working with religious communities and faith-based organizations in the environmental field;*

*Challenges and opportunities internal to the cultures of environmental organizations, e.g. religion as part of the challenges behind – as well as responses to – production and consumption, climate change, and diverse conflicts related to natural resources management.*

**3. How can UNEP, UN, and faith-based organizations, together with other civil society entities, realize coherent policies and an enabling environment for environmental sustainability at all levels?**

*Critical Assessment of challenges.*

*Exploring potential existing (as well as future) partnership moments.*

*Future needs and priorities for other platforms for exchanges on these issues.*

***Cross-Cutting Issues: human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment***

***Features***

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- An invitation will be made to UNEP divisions and regional offices and partners, including FBOs and academic partners/co-sponsors;
- UNEP and the UN Task Force on Religion and Development co-leading this workshop;
- Overall duration: 2.5 days (Arrival December 16th and departure on December 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019), depending of flight availability;
- Location: UNON-NAIROBI, Kenya;
- Peer-to-peer modality means that each participant, whether from the UN, or the faith/interfaith organizations is, simultaneously, a resource person;
- The course is largely interactive and includes panels, workshops, debates and diverse reflection exercises;
- Different knowledge materials are to be made available from participating agencies. Participants are invited to bring their own materials.