

FAITH FOR EARTH INITIATIVE
Conference in Skálholt, Iceland, 8-10 October 2019

Bishops and religious leaders from the Nordic countries, U.S. and Canada met with scholars, artists, holistic health practitioners, environmental grassroots activists and representatives from environmental organisations including the United Nations Environmental Programme's Faith for Earth Initiative. The participants discussed the role of faith, spirituality and religious belief in tackling the challenges of climate change and environmental degradation. The meeting was addressed by Guðmundur Ingi Guðbrandsson, Iceland's Minister for the Environment and Natural Resources.

Participants agreed that:

- The root causes of climate change and other sustainable development challenges faced by humankind emerge from human fallacies and cannot be addressed by technology alone.
- Faith, spirituality and religious beliefs offer common messages about caring for the creation and protecting nature, while mobilizing and engaging people based on their values.
- Faith leadership and communities are engaged in protecting the environment. To strengthen their efforts, there is a need for more effective communication, networking and greater alignment. Dialogue and engagement should equally include the voices of all genders, youth and indigenous traditions.
- The urgency of responding to climate change and the degradation of the Earth's ecosystems calls for leadership to be demonstrated through action supporting their words.
- As trusted and respected leaders in communities, faith leaders have an important role to play in guiding and catalysing the spiritual and cultural transformation needed to protect our common home. They serve as role models, reach people's hearts and inspire collective action.
- Iceland as a place of peace and goodwill has served as a convening place for international peace and environmental processes. Being located by the Arctic Circle, it is at the frontline of climate change impacts. Therefore, Iceland offers an opportune venue to bring together a coalition of faith and political leaders to engage on environmental issues. A "Faith for Earth Coalition" would allow faith leaders to set shared objectives in addressing climate change and environmental degradation. It would empower networks of local faith communities and facilitate sharing stories, experiences and traditional knowledge as well as stimulating collective action.

The meeting was organized by the United Nations Association in Iceland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland (ELCI), the Soil Conservation Service of Iceland, the Institute of Religion and Reconciliation and the Theological Institute, University of Iceland. It was sponsored by the ELCI and the Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources in Iceland.