

**CLIMATE JUSTICE AND FOOD SECURITY-MORAL ETHICAL AND
SPIRITUAL IMPERATIVE**

PREPARED BY

BEDRIA MOHAMMED AHMED

December 07, 2011

Mr Chair woman

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I greet you with a greeting of peace.

Assalamu Alaikum, good afternoon, Shalom, Habari,

May the Peace, Mercy and Blessing of Allah be upon you.

I am very delighted to be with you as we come together to request our leaders, who have been entrusted with Authority by Africans to act with due regard, looking objectively on the problems confronting the Africans especially women and children as a consequence of climate change and speak in one voice.

The theme on which I have been asked to speak is “Climate Justice and Food Security-Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Imperative from Islamic Perspective”. Consequently, I find it useful to start with a brief expose of the Islamic view concerning the earth and the creatures on it.

I think this is necessary because the Islamic perspective on climate change which was reflected at the Pan-African Interfaith Consultation on Climate Justice and Sustainable Peace in Africa that was held in Nairobi, Kenya and incorporated in the communiqué of the conference emanated from the teachings of Islam.

To this end, I will quote some sample verses from Quran to present a clear understanding of climate change from an Islamic perspective. According to some Muslim Scholars there are over 750 verses in the Quran that urge believers to reflect on nature, to study the relationship between living organisms and their environment, to make best use of reason and to maintain the balance and proportion God has built into the creation.

To begin with, the Allah (S.W) in Qur'an declared that the world and all that there is in it is created by Allah, Omnipotent, omniscient, merciful and just. There are several verses in the Qur'an that state this. Let me mention only two.

“To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth” 4:171

“To Him belongs what is in the heavens and on the earth and all between them and all beneath the soil.” chapter 20:6

As it is obvious from the two verses, Allah makes it clear that what is in the heavens and on the earth is not ours . If it is not ours, then we have no right to destroy it. It is created for us to benefit from it.

Allah (S.W) in the Qur'an also states:

“ Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, the alternation of the night and

The day, and the (great) ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits People, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to

The earth after its lifelessness and dispersing there in every (kind of) moving creature,

And (His) directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the

Earth is signs for people who use reasons” chapter 2: 164

A true believer, according to the Quran, should maintain and respect the sacredness of nature which contains signs of Allah.

The Quran emphasizes in several verses that Allah made human being the guardian of creation.

“Behold thy lord said to the angles. “I will create a vice regent on earth” 2:30

“It is He who has made you (his) agent’s inheritors of the earth” 6: 165

It is impermissible in Islam to abuse one’s rights as Khalifa, because the nation of acting in “good faith” underpins Islamic Law. The planet was inherited by all human kind and all its posterity from generation to generation. No one generation has the right to pollute the planet or consume its natural resources in a manner that leaves for posterity a planet that is denuded of its resources or polluted .

We are also told by Allah in the Qur’an

“Verily all things we have created in proportion and measure” 54: 59

“The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed; and the herbs and the

Trees both(alike) bows in adoration. And the firmament He has raised high and He has

Set up the balance (of justice). In order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So

Establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.” 55: 5- 9

“And the earth We have spread out, set therein mountains firm and immovable and

produced there in all kinds of things in due balance. And we have provided there in

means of sustenance for you and for those whose sustenance you are not responsible”. 15: 19 – 20

The three verses show that Allah created everything with due connection and concern to other creation. As a result, there must be balance between what we take and give in relation to our environment. We should ensure balanced use of natural resources throughout our lives.

In fact, Islam sees men and women as Allah's vicegerents on earth. Therefore, in the same way that Allah has power over His creation but is also its sustainer and protector, human beings must also combine power over nature with responsibility for its protection and sustenance.

On the basis of the Quran and Hadith, Islam has extensive teachings, both legal and moral, concerning the natural environment; the way that animals should be treated kindly, trees preserved and not cut unless absolutely necessary, vegetation guarded even in war, running water protected, and many other relevant issues.

The Prophet Mohammed (P.U.H) himself was always very kind to animals. As for trees, he emphasized the significance of creating what is today called green space. He said, "It is a blessed act to plant a tree even if it be a day before the end of the world".

To sum up, Allah in the Qur'an states certain general principles concerning the environment, such as that of balance between all parts of Allah's creation; the prohibition of waste, and respect for all life forms, and specific injunctions, such as the creation of protected areas for wild life.

But in many areas crises have been created during the past century as a result of the advent of modern technology, overpopulation economic plunder, and so on.

As a result, the present day climate change is affecting our physical and natural environment that resulted in food insecurity in the world. Muslims believe that climate change and its consequences that affect human beings are emanating from the ill – use of natural resources by being blind to the spiritual, ethical and moral principles of religious teaching.

In general, Muslims believe that Allah created nature in perfect balance and that Allah made humankind his viceroy on Earth, to make the world a better place and carry out that responsibility in accordance with his divine guidance. They also believe that every other

living thing on Earth was made subservient to human, but on the condition that such subservience should not be misused.

According to the teachings of Islam, Human kind has a responsibility to make the world a better place. Even in war, Muslim army commanders give strict instructions to their troops to avoid harming live plants and destroying crops. Every part of nature is a sign of Allah's greatness and to render any animal or plant extinct as a result of human activity is to destroy that.

To conclude, the religious leaders of Africa who met and deliberated on the principles of all religions in Nairobi, Kenya from June 6 – 9, 2011 reconfirmed that all followers of the world religions believe that the whole world belongs to God, who has given humankind, the responsibility to act as good stewards over the rest of nature.

The African religious leaders agreed to play their role and responsibility in reversing the current climate change crises. To this end, they committed themselves to lead their respective followers to promote climate justice by drawing on the spiritual, ethical and moral principles of their respective religious sources.

By doing so, I believe that religious teachings can play a pivotal role and provide us with a fresh perspective and consciousness of nature.

We, the people of faith, envision a world that is environmentally safe for our children and the next generations where all nations of all religions live in harmony with nature and enjoy justice and fair share of Allah's bounties.

We, therefore, should make concerted effort to contribute to the on-going global efforts dealing with climate change based on the common elements of all religious teachings.

Finally,

Let me conclude my speech by stating that I am very pleased to share my view with you on the "Climate Justice and Food Security – Moral, Ethical and Spiritual Imperatives from

Islamic perspective”, and also by sending my message to world leaders “ **when you see on your media “women and children who are displaced because of climate change, who live in a tent, exposed to other natural disaster, women and children who are waiting the charity of you developed countries, ask yourself what if this women is my mother or my wife and this child is you or your child?**

When you are entertaining your children think of those who are deprived from every right. Namely (Right to live, shelter, right to eat, right to access to primary health care and education etc.. because the reason for all of this is climate change.

We ask Allah, to bless our efforts and grant us the strength and courage to see our vision come true by guiding the leaders of the world to find common ground that will enable them to reach an agreement that will ensure the future we seek for ourselves and for our children. Allow me to finish my speech by borrowing a Kikuyu proverb that says. "You must treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children" Praise is to Allah, God.

May Allah’s God's peace be upon all of you!

Thank You!