



Sustainable Development From Islamic Perspective

Rami Lutfi Killawi

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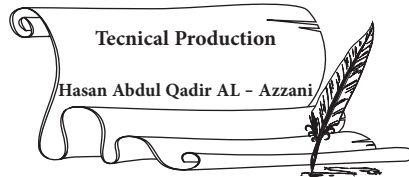
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by
Rami Lutfi Killawi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Foreword

All praise and thank is for Allah. May Allah's grace and peace be upon his honored Messenger and upon his Family, his companions, and whoever follows them in piety till the Day of Resurrection.

It is an honor for Islamic Affairs and Charitable Activities Department in Dubai-Research Department to present to all researchers and scholars this new book: Sustainable Development From Islamic Perspective.

Sustainable development is one of the contemporary issues that attract a growing worldwide attention.

Islam, as a religion of civilization, provides guidance and advice towards the happiness of humanity, and hence it cares for the issue of Sustainable Development. This is what the author presents in this book.

We present great thank and Du'aa to The family of Maktoum (May Allah guard them), who support knowledge and scholars, and support Islam and Arab issues. We thank specially H.H. Sheikh Muhammad Bin Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Vice President of the United Arab Emirates, Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai, who has established the knowledge community and support and patronage researching and researchers.

We ask Allah that people benefit from this research, and to bless us with guidance and success, and to guide us for more distinguished achievements.

Lastly, All praise and thank is for Allah. May Allah's grace and peace be upon his honored Messenger and upon his Family and his companions all.

Head of Research Department

Dr. Saif bin Rashid Al-Jabri



(We give a great deal of attention to our environment because it is such an integral part of our homelands, history, and heritage. Our ancestors lived on this earth and adapted to its environment whether land or sea; and by mere instinct and good common sense, they realized the need to upkeep that environment and use it only as needed in order to allow for future generations to find in it a source of sustenance and livelihood. Just like our ancestors, we too who live on this blessed land are responsible to care for our environment and to protect its wild life not only for our own benefit but also for our children and grandchildren. It is our solemn duty towards both our ancestors and children).

H.H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan

On the UAE's first Environment Day in 1998



Introduction:

Some may think that writing a paper about the Islamic view on sustainable development is an overreach that forces religion in the discussion of irrelevant subject matters as they assume that religion is meant to achieve spiritual goals such as refining moral values, speaking to the human soul, correcting misconceived articles of belief, and explaining the permitted and the forbidden rather than speaking about such strictly worldly matters. Such topics, they say, are best left to experts.

However, if Islam is encompassing of all aspects of life, searching for its views regarding such topics cannot be an imposition or an overreach. We are not trying to step on the toes of experts and cannot deny the importance of their work but we are studying worldly matters in light of the guidance brought forth by our faith. In doing so, we are



pairing knowledge with faith and combining those two perspectives. By doing so, moral values and belief systems become an encompassing framework of human life that includes its various aspects both economic and social.

It is true that the concept of sustainable development has only been recognized in recent years; and it may sound peculiar to try to connect it to the religion that was revealed and completed more than 14 centuries ago. However, if one is to interpret the meaning behind the terminology, one would find it consistent with tens of religious texts. Do not be surprised because Islam is the religion that God selected for humanity throughout time and place.

In this short paper, I will give several examples and clear proof that Islam has supported and

encouraged sustainable development since its inception fourteen centuries ago. How about that?

What is Sustainable Development?

Briefly, it is development that accommodates present day needs without adversely affecting the ability of future generation to fulfill their own needs. The term has come to the surface in 1987 in the context of a report titled "Our Common Future". The report was issued by the Brundtland Commission which is an international agency that deals with development and environment. At that point, the notion of sustainable development was new and revolutionary in developmental thought as the socioeconomic and environmental needs were merged in one definition for the first time. Afterwards, the term became widely known to the extent that it was used as a slogan for the second Earth Summit in Johannesburg, South



Africa in 2002 titled “The International Summit for Sustainable Development”.

In that sense, sustainable development entails collaboration between current and future generations in a way that secures the rights of coming generations in their fair shares of natural resources. The goals of sustainable development include improving living standards for world population and providing measures of health, adequate habitation, and prosperity for every individual.

What may be pleasing to a Muslim and surprising to a non Muslim is the knowledge that Islam brought forth the same notions fourteen centuries earlier than we as people did.

The basic assumption for sustainable development is responsibility towards future

generation and trying to avert future crises as much as possible. After all, they are entitled to have their fair share of wealth and natural resources that God created for mankind and deposited on this earth for all of us.

In the Quran, we read the story of Prophet Yousef(Joseph) A, and observe how his siblings envied him for the abundance of love that their father gave to him and how they conspired against him and threw him in the well and so forth; but what does that have to do with our current subject matter?

If you reflect on the story well, you should know the answer!

After his brothers threw him in the well, a group of travelers found Prophet Yusuf A and sold him as a slave in Egypt where he lived at the palace



of an official until his master's wife attempted to seduce him then threw him in jail for rejecting her advances. Several years later, he was taken out of jail to interpret the dream of the King and was eventually exonerated from all false charges.

The king saw seven fat cows being eaten by seven starved cows, and seven green wheat stems and seven dry ones. How did Prophet Yusuf interpret this dream? Yusuf A said: ‘This land will witness seven years of rain and plenty followed by seven more of drought and famine; then he told his king: “Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store 12:48. Then will come after that a year in which the people will be given rain and in which they will press [olives and grapes] 12:49» (Yousef).



He warned people of a famine that would have taken place had they not planned for it ahead of time. Do you now get my point? Yusuf (A) put forward a plan to provide food and rations for the future. Because of his plan, the country was saved from a catastrophic famine. This is the point that I wanted to get across and in it lays the basis for the idea of sustainable development. Do you not agree?

After all, isn't sustainable development in itself an act of planning to avoid future crises before they occur? That was exactly what prophet Yusuf did. The Quran gives us lessons to learn from and not mere entertainment.

With this, we have a Quranic text that is teaching us to plan for the future and avert possible crises before they occur and that is really the basis of sustainable development.



Some might say that Muslims never thought about the future and coming generations before they getting this idea from western countries and they never derived that line of thought from their own heritage. That may be true of present day countries but past Muslims were pioneers in developing and applying this progressive concept derived primarily from Islam.

As an example, the story of how Omar Ibn Al Khattab, the second Muslim Caliph, handled the distribution of conquered lands embodies this concept. People expected that Omar will divide it among warriors as a type of booty and as an implementation of the Quranic verse:”And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler, if you have believed

in Allah and in that which We sent down to Our Servant on the day of criterion - the day when the two armies met. And Allah, over all things, is competent” (Al Anfal: 41). In this aya, the Quran states that the fifth of the booty is to be given to the state whereas the rest was customarily given to the fighters.

However, Omar in fact did not give it to warriors although some demanded that he does. They said to him: divide the lands among fighters who conquered it like you would any military proceeds (Al Kharaj, Abi Yousef, p.23) But Omar had another view that stated that these lands cannot be divided among fighters because” what would happen to those future Muslims who would arrive and find that the land and its resources are already allotted and inherited and owned. This is not a sound judgment” (AlKharaj, Abi Yousef, p. 24).



One must pay special attention to his golden phrase:” What would happen to those future Muslims who will come??” The phrase indicates that he was strategically considering the well being of future generations. Thinking for the future is no strange matter for Muslims as they have been familiar with it since the days of the Four Reverent Caliphs.

(Omar said to his companions: I found evidence from the Quran; then he recited ayat Al Fay’ (the verse of war proceeds) from Surat Al Hashr - 6:

And what Allah restored [of property] to His Messenger from them - you did not spur for it [in an expedition] any horses or camels, but Allah gives His messengers power over whom He wills, and Allah is over all things competent.

And what Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the

Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.

For the poor emigrants who were expelled from their homes and their properties, seeking bounty from Allah and [His] approval and supporting Allah and His Messenger, [there is also a share]. Those are the truthful.

And [also for] those who were settled in al-Madinah and [adopted] the faith before them. They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is



protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.

And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, «Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed. Our Lord, indeed You are Kind and Merciful” (Al Hashr: 10).

These verses clearly indicate that the whole of the booty is for the (people’s treasury or Beitul Mal).

Then he said:’ people understood these verses to mean that every one of the Muslims had a right to that land (AlKharaj, Abi Yousef, p.26 & Al Istikhraj, Ibn Rajab, p. 18).

God made future generations partners in these proceeds (Al Hashr, 7) and if I were to give it all

up, nothing shall remain for those who will come after you(Al Kharaj, Ibi Yousef, p.23). I swear by He who owns my soul that if it were not for fear that I would leave future generations impoverished with nothing; I would have divided it up like prophet Mohammad (PBUH) did on the Day of Khaybar. Instead I will leave it as a treasury for them to divide it among themselves (Al Istikhraj, p.11&23, and Al Amwal, p. 73).

I urge you to pay close attention to the phrase” But I will leave it as a treasury for them to divide among themselves”. That in my opinion is a revolutionary and progressive way of thinking. This story is available for review in Sahih Al Bukhari, The Book of Battles, and the section on the battle of Khaibar. It recurs in the book Al Khoms(the Fifth) and in Al Mozara’a(Laws of Agriculturing).



The meaning of his saying 'If it were not for fear of leaving new generations impoverished(Baban)'. The term used was explained in Fatih AlBary in Sharh Sahih Bokhari by Al Hafith Ibn Hijr Al Asqalani: 'The term baban is the impoverished who have nothing. They are also termed baban in the sense of being equal in the same way. That means 'for fear of leaving them all impoverished with nothing equal in their poverty and lack of resources'. But was that the view of Omar alone amongst other Muslims of his time?

In fact it wasn't his view alone. It was actually not his initial opinion as he was about to divide the lands but was told by Moath (May Allah be pleased with him): If you do that, it would turn out contrary to your liking. If you divide it today, most wealth and resources will end up in the hands of the group of people; when they perish, the wealth will end up

in the hands of individual males or females, then future generations of good Muslims will come and find nothing. Instead, try to find a solution that will include both present and future generations. ‘Omar heeded Moath’s advice (Al Amwal, p.75). I will place stress on that wise phrase’ a solution that includes present and future generations’. In another version of the story: Omar said to his opponents who disagreed on his suspension of land ownership to benefit the entire Muslim nation: Do you want later people to arrive and have nothing?!

The day Sa’d Ibn Waqas conquered Iraq, Omar Ibn Al Khattab sent him the following: ‘Furthermore, I received your message in which you inform me that people are asking you to divide the spoils and riches among them. So divide what they have brought you in money and valuables among them and among Muslims present in your area;



but spare lands and rivers to their farmers so that their income will benefit Muslims now and in the future. The reason is that if we divide those among present folk s , coming generations will have no income’(The Book of Amwa by Abi Obaid Al Qasim Ibn Salam, P. 58 & Kitab Al Kharaj by Abi Yousef, & Al Amwal by Ibn Zingawaih).

That was not just an opinion by the Caliph Omar Ibn Al Khattab, but was the norm of future rulers after him. According to Al Mughni, Vol.2, later Muslims did not know of any land that was conquered by Muslims and divided except Khaiabar. Prophet Mohammad PBUH allotted half of it to his people so it cannot be taxed. The rest that was attained in the reigns of Omar and later rulers such as the lands of Syria, Iraq, Egypt and the rest were never divided or allotted’(AlMughni, vol. 2. p.716).



Tending to the wellbeing of future generations is not something that Muslims learnt from the West, but is derived instead from their own heritage and the guidance of their noble religion.

Environment First

One of the basic principles of sustainable development is to care for and preserve the environment. In Islam, there are numerous guidelines and directions for doing so.

Let me first draw your attention to what was mentioned in the Quran as indications of reverence and respect for the eco system. Did you know that many of the Surahs or chapters in Quran are names of natural phenomena? There are Surahs titled: The Sun, The Moon, The Night, The Thunder. Some Surah carry the names of animals such as The Cow, The Elephant, The Adiyat(The Horses). There are



Surahs carrying the names of insects like The Bees, The Ants, and The Spider. Some carried the names of minerals like The Iron, or plants like The Figs. Many ayah or verses talk about natural phenomena such as thunder, mountains, rocks, trees. How does that relate to the topic of environment?

When the Quran elaborates on such natural phenomena, it makes us realize and sense the importance of natural phenomena and that they are blessings and signs to indicate the Mercy, Presence, and Might of Allah (SWT). This realization should drive humans to preserve nature, care for its wellbeing, and work on developing it, by planting trees for example.

Trees

One of Islam's approaches to preserving and nurturing the environment is to encourage planting

trees. According to the Hadith,' If the Day of Judgment would suddenly be upon you and you have in your hand a plant, do not rise before you plant it if you can'(Authenticated by Imam Ahmad in his Mosnad as narrated by Anas Ibn Malik). Another Hadith states that the prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said:' Any Muslim who plants a tree, or sows and crop that is eaten by bird, human , or animal shall have for each the rewards of an act of charity'(Authenticated by Bukhari and Moslim as narrated by Anas).

This aspect of preservation relates to agriculture which as we all know has a key role in preserving the health of the environment. Trees filter out pollutants and emit Oxygen in the atmosphere. It consumes carbon dioxide and provide for humans beautiful scenery, cooling shade, and various fruits.



In another Hadith, Ibn Jarir narrated that Omara Ibn Khozaima Ibn Thabit said: 'I heard Omar Ibn Al Khattab saying to my father: why won't you plant trees in your land? My father answered: I am an old man and I may die tomorrow. Omar said: I urge you to do it. Then I saw Omar himself planting trees with his hands along with my father' (Al Jami' Al Kabir by Al Soyoti, 32 - 337).

We discussed actual planting of greenery, but while Islam encourages planting trees and shrubs, it also forbids cutting them down. That was the command of Abi Bakr Assidique, may Allah be pleased with him, to his army that he sent to Syria. In his mandate, he said: 'do not burn down palm trees...and do not cut down a tree bearing fruit'. If the first companion of the prophet PBUH and his first successor forbade his armies from harming trees during wars, how would you imagine his attitude towards trees in times of peace?



However, if we are to forbid the cutting of trees, how are we to obtain wood? Of course, there are large forests that grow at a reasonable pace. If we cut some of the trees down in a limited and well calculated rate, that should not have adverse effects on the wellbeing and endurance of the forest. Only designated forests that are officially certified eligible for logging are to be used in this manner. One of the conditions for sustainable development is to only use wood derived from designated forests.

If we are to go beyond the limits of designated tree wood, many forests will soon perish and disappear, which will lead to a real wood crisis in the world if not within our lifetimes, then in the future years of our children and grandchildren.

We need to be careful and prudent in wood consumption as well; otherwise, consumption will be greater than wood production through forests, which will lead to a definite crisis!



Economical Use of Paper

It should be clear by now that we have to also be frugal in our use of paper. Paper is made of wood as we all know!! Overconsumption of paper leads to excessive logging, which in turn leads to harming the environment in two ways. First, it leads to decreasing the green areas on Earth which are considered the breathing lungs of Planet Earth as plants use up carbon dioxide and emit oxygen which we all breathe in.

Secondly, when we consume more paper and cut down more trees, we are consuming fuel to start factories and labs, therefore, consuming even more energy and causing further pollution.

Thus, several universities and schools have started to use electronic and digital textbooks instead; not only to minimize paper usage but also to ease the physical strain on students that results

from carrying heavy bags. This policy makes it almost certain that one day in the future schools will be completely paper free.

Increasingly, electronic and digital media are becoming the norm to deliver news, books, magazines etc. This is only an example of alternatives that can be used to decrease paper usage. Millions of people around the world are using email, which saved our planets enormous amounts of paper, saved many trees, and protected the environment from more pollution. However, we have a duty to spread awareness among email users; since some of them still print out their emails to read on paper, which defeats the purpose and cancels out any benefit of email in paper and environmental conservation. It is therefore important to attach a phrase like ‘please do not print out this email, to save your environment’ to



all emails. Another example of possible ways to conserve paper is e bills whether they are electric, water or utility bills, which are sent out to millions of people every month. What would that lead to? Conserving millions of paper letters and tens of tons of paper that are dumped needlessly. Another way is to encourage digital applications and exchanges, which will save tons more and save many trees. In that way, we are better planning for a green future for humanity in which generations will enjoy clean air and abundant trees and eliminate the use of paper. Sounds great, but when will that happen?

It maybe sooner than we think, but until then, we can always recycle paper by collecting used paper and reusing it to make new paper. It is heartening to know that recycling a ton of paper can compensate for the cutting down of seventeen trees!!!

Recycling

It is important not to throw away used paper and magazines in the trash but place them in special containers to be recycled; but what if such containers are not readily available?

First, we will need to collect used paper. You could use a paper bag or cardboard box for that. The box could be as small as a tissue box or as large as one that holds bottles of beverages or water. Afterwards, we can place it in a trash container. If we cannot find one, we need to demand one from our city. We can solicit the help of environmental agencies whose mission is encouraged by our noble religion.

Societies for Public Welfare

The prophet (SAAW) said: The most beloved people to Allah are the most useful to people. He



also said: ‘Created beings are all the children of God and the ones He loves most are the most beneficent to His children’. (This Hadith although weak in its authentication goes in line with the call of the holy Quran which encourages beneficence in general terms:” Oh you who believe, kneel and prostrate and worship your Lord, and do good deeds, so that you may succeed”(Al Haj:77).

Doing good deeds includes all acts of charity and every beneficial effort that will yield good results to people and societies.

Therefore, we need to cooperate with such agencies and participate in their efforts and activities including events such as ‘a day with no paper’ as well as other initiatives such as planting trees, and using recycled paper products.

Recycling paper helps preserve our natural resources for a better future. Some such resources are trees, water, energy, and areas that are used to dump trash and refine oil. Recycling also reduces pollution. In addition, recycling paper creates five times more jobs than those created by manufacturing paper from tree pulp.

Important Guideline:

1. Think before you print! Do you really need to?
2. If you really need to print, resort to smart solutions such as printing on two sides of the paper, reducing font and margins as much as possible, and not printing pages that are not needed within a document. Also use appropriate printing properties that are compatible with paper size and use thinner paper.
3. Instead of printing, use pdf files or digital scanning to exchange information via email.
4. Do not discard paper that is not used fully. Instead, use both edges to make notebooks.



Water and Electricity

One of the main principles of sustainable development is to get people in the habit of using water and electricity in moderation without abusing either of these valuable resources. This principle can be derived from the guidance of our noble religion.

Islam prohibits wastefulness and excessive use of resources such as water, electricity and any other consumable resources. Let me remind you first of what has been said about careful use of water, since it is the essence of life as Allah (SWT) says:” And we have made all that is living from water”. The holy Quran also reminds us of the blessing of water and the danger of losing it in the end of Surat Al Mulk:” Oh Say: behold if your water becomes so deep you cannot reach it, who (other than Allah) will provide you with pure water”.



In the context of the prevention of wasteful use of water, the prophet (SAAW) said to a man that was making Wudo' by a river: do not use water in excess even if you are using the water of a flowing river. If the prophet (PBUH) forbade Muslims from wasteful use of water from a flowing river, other contexts make such use even more discouraged, since river water will not be affected by wasteful use. As a result, we learn that the intent of the prophet (PBUH) and Islam in general is developing the habit of using water frugally.

The holy Quran and noble Hadith include many warnings of wasteful behavior:

Allah (SWT) says: ‘- And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer: but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift.



” verily spendthrifts are brothers of the evil ones; and the evil one is to his Lord (himself) ungrateful” (Al Isra’: 2627-).

Also:” O Children of Adam Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not in excess, for God loveth not the wasters ” (AlAraaf: 31).

The prophet PBUH said:” eat, drink, dress up, and give to charity without excess or vanity’ (authenticated by Nassae and Ibn Majjah). It was also narrated that prophet Mohammad PBUH; used to make wudo’ with a madd (about 3/4 of a liter), and bathe with a saa (about 3 liters) of water”. How many liters do we use to make wudo today? Certainly many times more that what the prophet used to need. Most people will use that much. In bathing, we use as much as 60 or 70 even a 100 liters of water depending on the duration and



water flow. There is no doubt that this is a wasteful behavior. What should we do? One can attach a small valve to reduce the water flow for example. There are many contraptions that can help in this area to save water.

Let us also not forget that the water we use to make wudu and bathe requires great effort, energy, and cost to set up filtering stations and delivery and sanitizing systems which increase our consumption of energy and pollution. Our water use is not confined to wudu and bathing but we tend to waste water doing other things like brushing our teeth and letting the water run for a few minutes when not using it. There are many more examples of wasteful uses of water.

How about electricity? Has the prophet PBUH said anything about it? Of course, people did not have electricity at the time but they used fire



for light, heat, and cooking. The noble Hadith specifically commands Muslims to extinguish fires or oil lamps before sleeping and not let it burn at night. Electricity today is the equivalent of fire in those days. It is the main source of energy in homes and is used for lighting, heating, and starting electric machines.

Jaber Ibn Abdulla narrated that Prophet Mohammad (SAAW) said: 'when night falls, or you evening falls upon you, hold back your kids, for devils spread out at that time. When one hour of the night has passed, let them go, close your door, cover your pots, and say the name of Allah. Devils cannot open a closed door, and rest your water pitchers and utter the name of Allah; cover your pots and say the name of Allah, and if you need to, rest another object on them, and put out your lamps '(authenticated by Bukhari and Muslim). While this



Hadith is basically warning of the dangers of fire, it also serves to point out the importance of energy conservation and warns against wasteful use of electric machines, since any electric instrument will consume some energy during the night hours for no purpose. That is surely considered wasteful!! Just as we should put out any fire at night, we should turn off electric instruments including lamps except what is deemed necessary such as fridges and AC units.

Even when a TV or computer is left on standby mode⁽¹⁾, it is still consuming about 40% of its

(1) I read a report about how the British spend about 700 million pounds a year because citizens leave their television sets on the standby mode after they are turned off at night. During the time between turning the set off by remote control and switching it on again the next day, the set is still using up electric power. Accordingly, Britain squanders those millions in an age of scarcity in energy resources and danger of pollution worldwide.



full capacity when switched on. This is a broad area that is not confined to water and electricity. The prohibition of wastefulness also extends to everything that is useful. One of the Ahadith that forbid the wasting of anything that is of use relates to the dead sheep: The Prophet (SAAW) passed by a dead sheep and said: ' why don't you use its skin? The people with him said: because it is dead; to that the Prophet answered: God only forbade eating the dead animal (and not using its parts for other purposes' (authenticated in the Sahihein).In light of this Hadith, how would you imagine the response of the Prophet (SAAW) when he sees a leaking faucet, for example, in our times? I don't think that he would be silent about it for it is a definite waste and squandering of resources.

I read a report about how the British spend about 700 million pounds a year because citizens leave



their television sets on the standby mode after they are turned off at night. During the time between turning the set off by remote control and switching it on again the next day, the set is still using up electric power. Accordingly, Britain squanders those millions in an age of scarcity in energy resources and danger of pollution worldwide.

As a result, we need to understand our religion by projecting and applying its guidelines and broad instructions to suit our current situation and the nature of our times.

Included in the category of wasted resources is the inefficiency and shortage of development of agricultural lands and live stock. . Such inefficiency is a waste of great gifts from God. Part of this wastefulness is neglecting vital maintenance of machines and instruments which leads to their damage and shortens their lifespan.



Earth Hour

Earth Hour is an international event during which home and business owners are asked to switch off their lights and non essential electric appliances for one hour. It usually takes place on the last Saturday of March of every year. This hour has been introduced as a yearly event to raise awareness of the dangers of climate change and spread knowledge of the principles of sustainable development. Many agencies, organizations, malls, and institutions take part in this event which leads to a tangible result of this one hour in terms of lowering the overall consumption of energy. In addition, it urges people to become more prudent and conscious regarding their consumption of energy and resources.

- Earth Hour is a behavioral model with short term effects but could develop into a prolonged



daily behavior whose effects can reach others. This type of awareness that stems from intrinsic values can establish a future generation that is conscious of the dangers of wasteful use of resources and of the importance of economy in using energy that can eventually be depleted.

- Today, electricity is the beating heart of modern life and industrial and economical actions. It is credited with our unprecedented comfort and convenience; but let us remember that it is derived from fossil fuel that emits carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which in turn leads to global warming. For this reason, prudent use of electricity is a must on multiple levels.

- Earth Hour is not an hour of darkness, but rather a pronounced expression of the size, significance, and effectiveness of group work at a global level.



It indicates that there are simple behaviors that can have great effects, such as switching off light when not needed or raising the temperature setting on the AC or buying energy efficient appliances. These are all simple practices but they can make a great difference, not only in terms of lowering the levels of carbon emissions, but also in terms of lowering costs and guiding use of this important utility.

- Can we really donate one hour or a day to protect this planet? It is not a fantasy or a hard to reach ideal, but an existing reality that we can all take part in.

- Let us then encourage one another to turn off lights for one hour first; then this hour will eventually turn into a daily practice, which is a part of what we must do to save this country and this planet.

A clean Environment

Pollution is one of the most dangerous threats to the environment. It is true that it is a recently introduced threat that emanated from modern industries, transportation, and power generation. However, do you expect to be told that Islam preceded human civilization in addressing this issue? I will tell you affirmatively that it did. Prophet Mohammad (SAAW) urged us to be clean when he said 'Allah is Clean and He love cleanliness'. He commanded us to be clean in all aspects of our life, whether they be clean bodies, clothing, mosques, streets and water sources.

Included in this directive is all that threatens the environment in our modern times such as chemicals, gas emissions, etc. All are considered pollutants and all is included in the Hadith of the Prophet SAAW'



Faith is seventy some branches, the highest of them is to say “there is no God except Allah” and the lowest is to remove harmful objects from the road’. In another Hadith, he said:” steer clear of the three transgressions: defecating in reservoirs, on the road, or in the shade’. Anyone who pollutes water, air, or any place that serves people hurts others and is addressed in these Ahadith and in others, such as the one adopted by scholars as a rule for jurisprudence (Fiqh) which states that “Thou shall not harm or reciprocate harm”.

In this sense, everything that is harmful to people should be avoided and removed.

If you learn, for example, that using plastic bags is harmful to the environment, you need to avoid using this type of bags. But then again, how are these little bags harmful?



In fact, these little bags are extremely harmful to the environment, people, animals and even marine life. You have not heard that before? Then let me explain. Some of the chemicals that are used to manufacture these plastic bags are in fact toxins that take about a thousand years to disintegrate. These toxins are introduced to the food chain through seeping into the soil during this disintegration process. Thus, they endanger the birds or animals that might eat them and may eventually die of poison or suffocate to death because of the plastic wrapping around their heads.

In a study conducted by the UN Environmental program, plastic waste results in the death of more than a million sea birds every year; in addition it leads to the death of more than one hundred thousand sea mammals. What, then, is the solution?



The simple solution is to start using bags made of organic plastic or what is termed green plastic that is made of corn and other natural plants.

Such plastic has many useful features in addition to its fast disintegration process. It can also reduce the use of oil which is the basic source for the main components of regular plastic. When organic plastic disintegrates, it turns into a natural fertilizer rather than a toxin.

Sustainable Transportation

This term is used in the sense of transportation systems that are eco friendly. But then again, are there eco friendly and eco non friendly means of transportation??

Of course there are! Allow me to explain. When you use your personal vehicle to go to work every

day, you are using a substantial amount of gas and polluting the air with the gas emissions from your car.

As a substitute, you can use a means of mass transportation like the bus or subway. If the distance you need to cover is reasonable and the weather acceptable, use a bike or even walk. If that was not possible on your way to your work, do it in other trips such as your commute to your mosque for example. Many of our daily commutes can be done on foot or on bikes, but we insist on using cars, which increase gas consumption on the one hand, and increase the level of pollution to the environment on the other. In addition, using cars frequently can have negative health effects

The lack of walking and physical activity can adversely affect one's health. Relying too much



on modern transportation prompted people to stop walking and moving for the most part. Therefore, I have to say that walking and biking are some of the eco friendly means of transportation.

It is true that cars are necessary. After all, there are long distances to travel and rough weather that prevents people from walking all the time. I do not advocate banning cars but reducing dependence on them as much as possible. It is also important to use alternative transportation whenever there is a chance. There are also types of cars that use natural gas instead of oil, which may be better environmentally. Some of the other ideas available to limit pollution include car pooling. Instead of each person using their own car, several can commute together in one car instead. Wouldn't that significantly reduce traffic jams for one? Limit gas consumption as well? And reduce air pollution?



What does this title have to do with Islamic guideline? There are several principles in Islam that relate to this topic.

One such principle is the discouraging of wastefulness. Using cars in excess in trips and errands that can be done using alternative eco friendly means is considered wasteful. Another connection is the rule of “Thou shall do no harm”. Air pollution that results from car emissions is harmful to human health. Yet another connection is the directive to remove harmful objects from the road, as in the Hadith of Prophet Mohammad (SAAW)’ removing harm from the road is an act of charity’. Car pollution is a type of harm and removing it is an act of faith and charity so is preventing it altogether. That can be accomplished by using better, more efficient and less polluting means of transportation.



Is it an overstatement after all this to say that the values of Islam support using alternative eco friendly means of transportation?

Sustainable Consumption

I attended a lecture that was given by an expert in sustainable consumption in which the lecturer concluded every one of his points with the phrase “and this is something that Islam called for 14 centuries ago”. By sustainable consumption, we mean considering the wellbeing of the environment when buying products on all levels, whether the buyer is an individual or an institution or even a government. Everybody is responsible for implementing the concepts of sustainability and eco preservation when making various purchases. The idea can be further clarified through examples.

When shopping, we should only buy what we need. Many people buy more than what they need

for several reasons. They could be influenced by commercial ads, they could be jealous of others, or they could do it just for fun. This phenomenon usually appears in wealthy societies. This excessive consumerism is a part of wastefulness that is forbidden in Islam. But what is the connection between extravagant purchasing of goods and sustainability and the environment? In fact , it is a strong connection. Excessive purchasing of goods means excessive consumption that exceeds normal common sense limitation to what people actually need, which means extra loads on factories, transportation. In turn such excessive purchasing leads to increasing pollution and depletion of resources. It also leads to increasing waste. Excessive buying, in this sense, adversely affects the environment.

Not only is there a problem in the quantity of purchases, but also in the quality of products being



purchased. There are special brands and types of products that are eco friendly and should be purchased instead of the customary brands. Eco friendly products are the ones that do not harm people or the environment during production, shipping, storing, use, or consumption.

This means that local products are better than imported ones because transporting goods relies on fuel using vehicles and causes pollution. It also means that seasonal products are better than the ones stored in refrigerators.

The preference for less pollution causing products is a broad subject that includes all kinds of goods. For example, all products that use plastic or other harmful ingredients should be avoided as much as possible and every product that leads to the emission of harmful substances such as carbon dioxide should also be avoided as much as

possible. Instead, we should turn to eco friendly products. There are exhibits that are held every year to showcase eco friendly products. Certificates are often given to such products by specialized international agencies.

Eco friendly products are ones that contribute in the reduction of the ecological footprint. It does so by using renewable energy resources such as solar power or recycled material. Such products do not produce waste material that can harm human beings or the environment.

Nations much like Yourselfes

One of the principles of sustainable development is to 'protect all beings that share with us life on this planet' whether birds or animals. Such beings are basic components of the eco system that we live in and benefit from. Islam instructed us to care for other beings and treat them well. There



are plenty of examples and texts that present this value, such as the Ahadith 'A woman entered hellfire for mistreating a cat', Allah (SWT) forgave a prostitute for giving water to a thirsty dog', and 'whoever killed a bird for entertainment only, will witness that bird complain to God on the Day of Resurrection saying so and so killed me for no purpose but only for amusement'. Islam also instructed us to be gentle when slaughtering an animal' Allah ordained charity for everything, even when you kill, kill with charity, and when you slaughter, slaughter with charity and sharpen your blade and put at ease the animal you're slaughtering' (Narrated by Muslim).

For example, what does this aya : ' There is nothing except praising and thanking Him, but you do not understand their praise' means in connection with our discussion?? If the human conscience



firmly believes in the meaning of this aya, how is he going to treat other beings whether animals or birds? For sure he will treat them with kindness and compassion.

This meaning is also evident in the following Hadith: One of the prophets of God was stung by an ant, so the prophet ordered his men to burn down the ant colony so it got burned. Allah then, told him: 'for the sting of one ant you burn down an entire ant colony that is praising God. Shouldn't it have been only one'(Agreed upon). In this Hadith, we are told how to approach the previous ayah 'And there is nothing that does not praise Him'. It tells us how to care for the survival of such beings. We can also apply the teachings of the Prophet SAAW to understand yet another ayah from the holy Quran. The ayah is a part of the story of prophet Nuh (PBUH) which is mentioned in Surat Hud 40: "At



length, behold there came our command, and the fountains of the earth gushed forth we said: embark therein, of each kind two, male and female, and your family except those against whom the word has already gone forth, and the believers. but only a few believed with him.’. Can you see in this ayah an indication of care and responsibility for animals and their survival? Allah (SWT) ordered Nuh (PBUH) to build the ark and then even before the flood, He ordered him to take with him different species of animals to ensure that they will not get extinct. Al Qortobi said in his interpretation:’ it means take a male and a female to maintain the survival of the species after the flood’. Also, can you agree with then me that the Quran narrates the oldest rescue mission of living beings? And that it is our responsibility to work by it and preserve these beings?



What should we do today? Is there a danger of extinction that is threatening living beings? What should we do about it?

As I mentioned earlier, there is an illegal logging of trees which can compromise forests. There is also illegal hunting that is being practiced by human beings against several species of animals. There are many poaching operations carried out in many parts of the world. Elephants are being targeted for their ivory tusks; tigers and bears are being hunted for their precious fur ; and aggressive fishing practices threaten the survival of many species of fish. There is also unlawful bird hunting that is carried out during their mating season. Imagine birds being killed and their chicks left behind in their nests waiting for someone to bring their food only to starve to death. What cruelty!! That is why



we need to stop these unfair and cruel practices against other living beings.

Are you now saying: 'Thank God that I am not a hunter and I play no part in this matter'? To the contrary. Every person is responsible. If you are not a hunter, you are still a consumer that may buy products of unfair hunting, and therefore, you are a partner in bearing this responsibility contrary to what you or others may think. Your role as a buyer and consumer has been explained previously when we discussed sustainable consumerism. It is to buy eco friendly products. Do not buy what can encourage unfair hunting. Do you like to buy products that contain ivory from elephants, crocodile skin, or the fur of tigers or bears? You are then encouraging the butchery of these animals. You may even be committing a sin or a religious or legal taboo without realizing it. Most laws



in most countries forbid this type of unfair and illegitimate hunting; as a result, the products of this type of hunting are also illegal. When we buy such products, we are committing an unlawful act. From a religious point of view, certain texts from the prophetic Sunna prohibit the use of the skins of predatory animals. Scholars affirmed that they are impure and that their impurity cannot be washed away with processing, and that Muslims should not pray in garments made from such skin. Al Miqdad Ibn Ma'd IKareb said: I heard the Prophet SAAW prohibit wearing the skins of animals of prey and riding on them⁵. There are several other Ahadith about this subject.

Sustainable Fishing

This type of fishing does not deplete fisheries and fish population. To ensure that the quantities and



fish stocks are adequate and within a sustainable rate, we need to monitor the fishing operations and manage them to maintain the rate of exploitation within or near the level of renewal or sustainability.

Sustainable fishing also includes fishing methods that do not harm fish sanctuaries or unwanted marine life that are then cast away or destroyed.

Good management of fishing operations is conducive of securing promising stocks of fish for the future. It contributes to the maintaining of jobs in the fishing industry and the protection of marine life. Some fishing methods are certified by the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) which recognizes fishing agencies that abide by the council's standards for fishing.

5. Narrated by Abu Dawood. Also, it was narrated by Termethie and Nassae that the prophet

(SAAW) forbade Muslims from sitting on the skins of predators. Moaweiah Ib Sufian said that the Prophet (SAAW) forbade the riding on the skins of tigers(Narrated by Abu Dawood). Al Mobarakfori in Tohfat Al Ahoothi said: These Ahadith indicate that it is forbidden to use the skins of wild predatory animals.

The council also honors and distinguishes such agencies by providing them with the right to use their ‘eco friendly’ labeling on their products

You are All Responsible

Everything that has been mentioned so far infuses the cause of environmentalism with an added religious dimension for Muslims in addition to the legal and ethical dimensions. When laws and regulations banning practices that harm the environment in any way are issued in one’s country



of residence, they instantly become mandatory and have to be followed both legally and religiously. No country is void of laws that prevent environmental abuse one way or another, but such laws differ from time to time and from one place to another. Such laws vary because environmental problems vary in different countries and they change and develop with time and ecological conditions from one place to another. In countries that have endangered species of certain animals, laws will focus on such species and forcefully ban people from hunting or trading in such animals; and so on. However, there are common guidelines that exist across the border such as maintaining a clean environment for example. No country allows for pollution or littering. Nations vary in the degree of enforcing such laws based on the individual country's level of awareness of the importance of environmental

well being. Some countries lag behind while others are far ahead.

Ecological Footprint

The ecological footprint is a measure of the impact of a certain community on planet Earth and its natural systems. The measure of ecological footprint demonstrates the level of sustainability of the lifestyle of the population in a given state. It points out their impact and the possible damages they cause to the planet. The results can be inferred through comparing the people's consumption of natural resources with the capacity of Earth to regenerate those resources.

Our planet has unique eco systems that can assimilate our waste products and convert them to new usable resources. For example, forests assimilate our carbon waste and store it in the



form of new wood that can be used again. In this context, the biocapacity is the ability of a specific eco system to produce natural resources that can be humanly exploited, while simultaneously assimilating the natural waste products that result from such exploitation. The balance between those two processes differ from one country to the other according to the variation in eco systems, natural resources, and the level of waste products in each country.

The measure of ecological footprint also factors in the natural traits of each state and the subsequent differences in productivity that are based on a country's biocapacity. For example, a country like Brazil has a much higher biocapacity than the United Arab Emirates(UAE) because of its rain forests, which automatically gives Brazil a

higher productivity that the desert environment of the UAE.

At the end, this measure calculates the value of a global hectare per person, which is a value that clarifies the amount of biologically productive land and sea area that supply the needs for resources in a given country while also assimilating the waste produced by its inhabitants. That would be the meaning of an ecological footprint for each country. The higher the value of ecological footprint, the more worrisome the situation becomes.

According to a report issued by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) in 2008, the ecological footprint in the UAE is 9.5 global hectares per person, which is very high. The global biocapacity is 2.1 global hectares, which means that if the world had the same footprint as the UAE, we would need four and a half planets like Earth to supply the demand

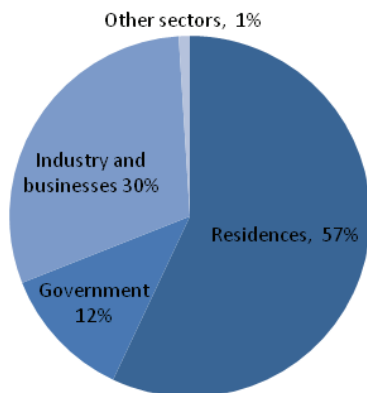


on natural resources. What is the reason for such a high footprint? There are several reasons and they mostly arise from the local environment itself. The UAE is a harsh hot dry environment with limited water resources, which drives people to rely on air conditioners all year long and everywhere. It also drives them to rely on cars for transportation, to use distilled water, and import most consumer products. What does that mean in this context? Most of what we eat or wear is imported; our water is artificially distilled; our air is conditioned; and our transportation is done by car. All of that is certain to increase the ecological footprint of this country. During the last few years, several measures have been taken to reduce the ecological footprint in the UAE. Such measures include issuing laws that enforce care for the environment in all activities in the fields of industry, trade, agriculture and tourism, which pave the way to a significant transformation

that can make the UAE an example to be emulated in the area of green sustainable development.

Every individual living in the UAE is responsible for its ecological footprint, since each of us contributes to it one way or another. By analyzing the ecological footprint, we can determine the liability of different sectors within society for the overall ecological footprint of the country. In turn, this would help us realize how such sectors can help reduce it. This chart below illustrates the contributions of different sectors in the overall ecological footprint in the UAE.

Ecological Footprint in UAE per sector



This chart illustrates the percentages of the three basic sectors within the Emirati society, which are house hold consumption, governmental sector, and the sector of industry and business, and their contribution to the overall ecological footprint in the UAE. It is important to take such statistics into account when forming new policies that will help shape our priorities, as they help policy makers recognize the sectors with the highest percentage in the ecological footprint. As a result such statistics will help make targeted and effective plans to solve this problem. Since everyone takes a part in creating the problem, everyone has to also take part in solving it. For this reason, the campaign of corporate champions, which is a part of the campaign of Emirati Champions, is working alongside the business and industry sector to raise the level of awareness and assist corporations in reducing their share of the ecological footprint.



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