Australian Bahá'í Community

Climate Change: The Earth is but One Country

Among the most basic tenets of the Bahá'í teachings is a belief in the unity and interconnectedness of all things. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of our religion, taught that there is one God, Whose task for humanity today is the construction of a just and peaceful world-embracing civilisation.

> *Every man of discernment, while walking upon the Earth, feeleth*
> *indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing*
> *which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his*
> *exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God,*
> *the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men.*
> Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'ís believe unity should also characterise our relationship with the natural world. Nature, in all its diversity, reflects the qualities and attributes of its Creator, and hence must be respected and cherished as the living heritage of present and future generations.

There is no doubt that protection of the environment and the achievement of sustainable development are critical and challenging issues in today's world. Over the past century we have witnessed a great acceleration in the destruction of the earth's biological diversity and the ever-widening inequality in the distribution of its resources.

The changes in the earth's climate that we witness today are a consequence of a material civilisation that has been carried to excess. A civilisation that replaces the citizen with the consumer cannot concern itself with the long-term viability of life on earth.

Our teachings state that:

> *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.*

We believe the financial, technical, human and moral resources required to respond to climate change will only be released when the peoples and governments of the world adopt a shared and connected sense of responsibility for the fate of the planet and for the well-being of the entire human family. Only a vision of a global society, supported by universal values and spiritual principles, and founded on justice and equality, can inspire individuals and government to take responsibility for the long-term care and protection of the natural environment.

The absence of this wider loyalty — to humanity as a whole, and to the planet we share — from decision-making processes at every level has contributed directly to the challenge of climate change facing the planet.

The Bahá'í community advocates the adoption of the concept of world citizenship as a global ethic with the power to move hearts, change minds, and inspire action. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh, the Prophet-Founder of our Faith, "the Earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

World citizenship begins with an acceptance of the oneness of the human family and the interconnectedness of all the nations of the Earth. While it encourages a sane and legitimate patriotism, it also insists upon a wider loyalty, a love of humanity as a whole. World citizenship encompasses the principles of social and economic justice, both within and between nations; non-adversarial decision-making at all levels of society; equality of the sexes; racial, ethnic, national and religious harmony; and the willingness to sacrifice for the common good. Such an approach will lead to a heightened awareness of the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, whose core activities in sustaining their livelihoods will be directly affected. We need to take on shared responsibility, making best use of the sciences and technological developments, to proactively and compassionately respond to those affected most severely by climate change.

As the stewards of the Earth for our own and future generations, it is our God-given responsibility to learn to make use of the Earth's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability into the distant reaches of time. Fostering world citizenship is a practical and necessary strategy to achieve this.