

Background to UN Agenda for Peace; Repurposing the Trusteeship Council:

<https://parliamentofreligions.org/climate-action/un-new-agenda-for-peace/>

The [New Agenda for Peace](#) will implement proposals included in the Secretary-General's 2021 report, "Our Common Agenda" given on the 75th anniversary of the UN. In their unanimous UN 75th Anniversary Declaration, UN Member States called on the Secretary General to prepare a new Agenda for Peace in order to "prevent the outbreak, escalation and recurrence of hostilities on land, at sea, in space and in cyberspace and to resolve ongoing armed conflicts... through peaceful means."

The Common Agenda Report is rich, multi-faceted and complex. Its purpose is to shape the UN efforts to deliver on the "promise of the UN Charter", and builds on the Declaration on the 75th Anniversary of the UN, in which Member States made several "commitments";

to leave no one behind; to protect our planet; to promote peace and prevent conflict; to abide by international law and ensure justice; to place women and girls at the centre; to build trust; to improve digital cooperation; to upgrade the United Nations; to ensure sustainable financing; to boost partnerships; to listen to and work with youth; and to be prepared for future crises, including but not limited to public health crises. With this communication, we are responding specifically to the possibility of appointing a Special Advocate for Future Generations and repurposing the Trusteeship Council. (See page 4, fifth paragraph, and paragraph 125. See also Graphic 11 on page 7.)

Parliament Letter to the UN Secretary General:

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The Parliament of the World's Religions is honored to respond to the call of the Secretary-General for comments by civil society organizations on the United Nations New Agenda for Peace now being prepared by the Secretary-General's Office to implement the proposals of his 2021 report, "Our Common Agenda" and following up on the UN 75th Anniversary Declaration.

- The Parliament of the World's Religions is a leading international interfaith organization. Our Convenings are the world's largest and most inclusive interfaith gathering, with an average attendance of more than 8,000 diverse participants. We are guided by our signature document, the historic Global Ethic adopted at our centenary Convening in 1993. Our mission is to bring

into being a world of peace, justice and sustainability by fostering harmony among the world's religions and spiritual communities, and by promoting their engagement with the critical issues facing the world. Human dignity is central to our mission, as is care for the Earth and for all life.

- The Parliament unequivocally affirms that human rights – including The Right to a Healthy Environment and rights of women and girls and of Indigenous peoples – must be central to the New Agenda for Peace. The theme of our August 2023 *Convening* is “A Call to Conscience: Defending Freedom and Human Rights.”
- The Parliament celebrates the historic recognition by the UN General Assembly of The Right to a Healthy Environment as a basic human right, for which we advocated and which we are now promoting. We emphasize that human dignity and well-being are inseparable from those of the natural world and all its ecosystems and biodiversity, which must be protected and restored.
- The Parliament calls on *everyone to bear in mind* that the Climate Emergency is a global threat to peace, as climate change intensifies the conditions of conflict, poverty and social breakdown.
- The Parliament especially and strongly supports the important proposal of the Secretary-General in “Our Common Agenda” to repurpose the Trusteeship Council, as follows: “I invite States to consider making the Council available as a multi-stakeholder body to tackle emerging challenges and, especially, to serve as a deliberative forum to act on behalf of succeeding generations. Among other tasks, it could issue advice and guidance with respect to long-term governance of the global commons.” (See Section 125).

We call for the Charter of the United Nations to be amended as follows to include a new responsibility for the Trusteeship Council:

The Trusteeship Council will act as trustee for and in the best interests of future generations, especially with regard to the management of the global commons and such public goods and public risks as are associated with the management of the commons. The purpose of this management guidance and advice shall be to preserve the right of self-determination for future generations and to prevent actions which would foreclose the exercise of that right.

Under current law and governance, future generations are as disenfranchised as the residents of territories held under UN Mandate at the time of adoption of the Charter, yet they will be affected by decisions and actions in which they have no agency. It should be the new and extended purpose of the Trusteeship Council to serve as Advocate for Future Generations in all UN Actions and decisions adopted under Conventions and Agreements ratified and recognized by the United Nations.

We believe that the proposed new role of the Trusteeship Council has immense potential to safeguard Rights recognized by the United Nations, especially The Right to a Healthy Environment. The ecosystems that support life on this planet belong to all – including the planet's atmosphere, oceans, seabeds, wild areas, and the Arctic and the Antarctic. Ensuring the flourishing of these ecosystems for all humans, including future generations, and for Earth, our common home, establishing Peace in the fullest sense of harmony, wholeness and right relationship is a fundamental responsibility of the United Nations.

Advocacy White Paper: The Voices of Our

Children <https://parliamentofreligions.org/blog/the-voices-of-our-children-2/>

January 24, 2023

David Hales is the Chair of the [Climate Action](#) Task Force at the Parliament of the World's Religions and the former leader of environmental policy and sustainability programs for the US Agency for International Development.

The voices of our children call out to us. Sometimes it is a conscious cry, as in the school walkouts by hundreds of thousands of children in more than *100 countries calling for* action on the climate crisis, the statements of young people at multiple climate and sustainability conferences, or in the many legal actions brought in courts around the world, including the case of *Juliana v. United States*. Sometimes the cry is unarticulated, and reflected through our children's behavior, which too *often is affected by* our own irresponsibility. Either way, their cry to us is unmistakable.

Climate change is the defining **Moral Issue** of the 21st Century. Decisions we make, at the individual level, at the institutional level, and at the societal level, create climate winners and losers. This is a responsibility we cannot avoid.

We are the first generation in human history that has had the opportunity to achieve sustainable and just societies. We have the knowledge, the technology, and the wealth to succeed. Moreover, for half a century, we have known what the consequences of our choices would be for the world of the future and for our children. It is clear that we have lacked the courage and the will to make the morally right choices.

The reality that will follow from our refusal or inability to act is clear in its outline, and even in much of its detail. We, humans, have chosen to allow ourselves to become a force of geological proportions – to create the Anthropocene Age. Our fingerprints are all over every sin against the natural world and against our children.

Each and every *one of us is* responsible for the world our choices have created. Each day that passes without our finding the courage to make the decisions we know are necessary adds to the unconscionable burden we bequeath to our children and grandchildren. The difficulty of the decisions we leave to them will far exceed the difficulty of the decisions we face today.

Our children may curse us for our cowardice and greed as they consider their legacy of emptiness, poverty, and violence, but an even more dire fate awaits our grandchildren. We leave them a world that our parents would not recognize, bereft of much of the beauty, complexity, and riches we have squandered. Our actions are poised to break the bond between grandparents and grandchildren; we will not recognize the world in which we condemn them to live, and they will be strangers to the beauty and bounty of the world our parents left to us.

Scientists from across the world have built a body of knowledge that leaves no doubt about the imminent destination of the paths we are on. Many policymakers and advocates have called for fundamental change. Numerous economists and financial analysts have documented the effects of our wanton waste of the planet's precious resources and of the willful indulgence of our own greed and unsustainable consumption. *None of them have* yet been sufficiently effective to change the policies of the world's major nations, and we bear the responsibility for that.

Think of religious and faith leaders, especially at the local level, who have a responsibility to lead in paths of righteousness, have largely remained silent in the face of the greatest challenge faced by humankind. It is their silence that will be deemed the greatest dereliction of their responsibility by future generations.

Their silence does not excuse our silence or inaction, however. We each bear the responsibility for our own actions. Individual decisions we make in our own lives may seem to have small consequences in terms of the cumulative impact of CO2, but the moral implications of those decisions are not small for the individual making the decisions. Even if we make conscientious decisions ourselves and advocate for wise decisions and policies, the fact that our positions have not yet carried the day does not relieve us from bearing responsibility for the impacts of the decisions and policies that have prevailed.

No person of good faith and sound mind can deny that climate change is real and caused by the actions of humans. *None can honestly deny* that the consequences we are already experiencing will continue and worsen. We have chosen this climate-changed world with the decisions we have made, but we can still choose a different and better world together with our children.

The time for plain speaking and effective action is now.

Our children and theirs deserve a voice in the decisions we make today. We have an opportunity to begin to allow that voice to be heard by repurposing the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations to act on behalf of and in the best interests of future generations.

That is why I join the call for the Charter of the United Nations to be amended to include a new responsibility for the Trusteeship Council:

THE Trusteeship Council WILL ACT AS TRUSTEE FOR AND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE GLOBAL COMMONS AND SUCH PUBLIC GOODS AND PUBLIC RISKS AS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMONS. THE PURPOSE OF THIS MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE AND ADVICE SHALL BE TO PRESERVE THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS AND TO PREVENT ACTIONS WHICH WOULD FORECLOSE THE EXERCISE OF THAT RIGHT.

Under current law and governance, future generations are as disenfranchised as the residents of territories held under the UN Mandate at the time of adoption of the Charter, yet they will be affected by decisions and actions in which they have no agency. It should be the new and extended purpose of the Trusteeship Council to serve as Advocate for Future Generations in all UN Actions and decisions adopted under Conventions and Agreements ratified and recognized by the United Nations.

This proposed new role of the Trusteeship Council has immense potential to safeguard Rights recognized by the United Nations, especially the Right to a Healthy Environment. The ecosystems that support life on this planet – the atmosphere, oceans and ocean floors, and wildlands, including the Arctic and the Antarctic — belong to all. Ensuring the flourishing of these ecosystems for all humans – including future generations – and for all life on Earth, is essential to establishing Peace in the fullest sense of justice and harmony and is a fundamental responsibility of the United Nations.

Amending the UN Charter is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Only *three initiatives have been* successful, the latest in 1973. However, the provisions related to the Security Council and to the Economic and Social Council were grounded in the original principles and purpose of the Charter, and necessary to adapt to changing times. The proposed Amendment to repurpose the Trusteeship Council is also firmly grounded in the original principles and purposes and just as necessary to enable the UN to carry out unique fundamental responsibilities.

Thomas Jefferson put it plainly and simply:

"I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times."