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***One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on
Recasting Humanity's Relationship With the Natural World
The Bahá'í International Community***

***Presented at the G-20 Gathering on the Environment
Stockholm, Sweden- 1 June 2022***

One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship With the Natural World

Introduction to Document presented by the Bahá'í International Community in
Stockholm, Sweden—1 June 2022, G-20 Gathering on the Environment

“This span of earth is but one homeland and one habitation. It behooveth you to abandon vainglory which causeth alienation and to set your hearts on whatever will ensure harmony.”

~ Bahá'u'lláh, Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith (1817-1892)

The natural world, in all its wonder and majesty, offers profound insight into the essence of interdependence. From the biosphere as a whole to the smallest microorganism, it demonstrates how dependent any one life-form is on numerous others—and how imbalances in one system reverberate across an interconnected whole.

Intimately embedded in this greater system, and deeply reliant upon it, humanity faces a paradox growing more consequential by the day. On the one hand, the human race has never held more power to shape the physical world on planetary scales—a development some have termed the anthropocene. This is a testament to our collective ingenuity and creativity, as well as the boundless potential before us. On the other, that very power, when untempered by thoughtful consideration and directed by priorities heedless of the present and future common good, gives rise to consequences not only worldwide in scope but potentially irreversible.

As the grave effects of surpassing planetary limits become increasingly apparent, from climate change to biodiversity loss to environmental degradation and pollution, humanity is being compelled to develop more mature, collaborative, and constructive relationships between its peoples and with the natural environment.

Trusteeship of the Natural World

Human beings exercise a level of influence over the natural world unique among all forms of life on the planet. At times, this has been construed as justification for an orientation toward mastery and control of nature, buttressed by notions of ownership and dominance. As more and more people have come to recognize humanity's interconnection with and dependence on the environment, however, they have accepted that our unique impact carries with it the inescapable duty to nurture and protect the natural world.

Each of us enters the world as a trust of the whole. Each in turn bears a measure of responsibility for the welfare of all and for the planet on which we depend. This world-encompassing sense of trusteeship does not seek to eliminate humanity's impact on the natural world. Material resources will always be required to sustain and advance civilization. The goal, rather, is to direct that impact consciously, creatively, and compassionately.

As we learn how best to utilize the earth's raw materials for the good of all, we must be conscious of our attitudes toward the source of our subsistence. Our activities must reflect the fact that the wealth and wonders of the earth are the common heritage of all people, who deserve just and equitable access to its resources. Our choices must evince an intergenerational perspective in which the well-being of future inhabitants is taken into account at all levels of decision-making. And in this turbulent period of human history, our activities must increasingly be tempered by the wisdom and judgment that come with growing maturity.

***"Is there any deed in the world that would be nobler than service to the common good?
No, by the Lord God!" ~ Bahá'í holy writings***

One people in one global homeland

From a perspective wide enough to encompass the planet in its entirety, humanity can be seen in no other light than as one people living in one global homeland. Consciousness of this oneness, expressed through relationships of justice, constitutes the only foundation on which sustainable societies can be raised.

Every people, in its own way, celebrates the ever-abundant beauty and grandeur of nature. The traditions of every culture pay homage to that priceless heritage that sustains not only the physical needs of bodies but also the transcendent qualities of the spirit. The task of building a sustainable and flourishing world holds the promise of providing a point of unity not only in shared endeavor, but in joyful celebration as well.

To acknowledge humanity's oneness is not to suppress variations of expression, culture, or social organization. The principle of unity contains within it the essential concept of diversity; indeed, this is what distinguishes it from uniformity. In the natural world, systems flourish through the interaction of highly diversified elements. Differences between various components can enhance the functioning of the whole and strengthen the resilience of the overall system. In human affairs, diversity of thought, background, and approach are similarly critical. It is through the interaction of diverse perspectives and experiences that higher degrees of truth can be found and insight gained. Otherwise, an overabundance of similar views and opinions, like excessive dependence on a single natural resource, leaves a system exposed to dangers and vulnerable to breakdown.

The contributions of ever more populations, well coordinated and integrated, will be required to rebalance humanity's relationship with the natural world. Presumptions of any one group's superiority over another, asserted along lines of nationality, race, wealth, or any other characteristic, cannot but erode the bonds needed to generate consensus and sustain coordinated action. Feelings of otherness invariably undermine motivation to work for the common good, either social or ecological.

[Complete text of the document- (<https://www.bic.org/statements/one-planet-one-habitation>)