

ever-advancing continuum that has a design. Each religion, they assert, has its origins in a common source or Godhead. A covenant exists between God and humanity whereby God reveals His plan gradually through His messengers. This is the fountainhead of human progress. Thus, from time to time, God sends forth prophets with revelations appropriate for a specific people at a specific period of human development. In keeping with the idea of this "progressive revelation", often the laws and customs of preceding revelations are abrogated with the advent of each succeeding religion. For Bahá'ís, Bahá'u'lláh has revealed God's message to humanity for the current age; an age which will be characterized by world unity.

Bahá'u'lláh (tr. "The Glory of God"), who was born in Persia, revealed numerous volumes of scriptures and laws upon which the Bahá'í Faith is founded.

He lays claim to being the most recent in a line of chosen messengers from God that includes his immediate precursor known as The Bab (tr. "The Gate"), Mohammed, Jesus, Moses and Abraham as well as Zoroaster, Buddha and Krishna. The Bab (1819-1850) who was born in Shiraz, Persia revealed in 1844 that he was the "gate" for One greater than himself who would begin His mission to humanity in 1863. Ecclesiastical and civil authorities in Persia, alarmed by the rapid growth of the Babi Movement and The Bab's claim to a revelation from God, persecuted His adherents and martyred The Bab on July 9, 1850. Likewise, because of His teachings, Bahá'u'lláh spent His adult life in prison and exile

in various outposts of the Ottoman Empire, finally living out His last days under house arrest in the port city of Akka, near Haifa, Israel.

While the Bahá'í Faith has its origins in Islamic Persia, it is a discrete and

independent faith that claims to represent the fulfillment of prophecies in the sacred texts of the preceding world religions. Bahá'ís hold all revealed scriptures in highest regard as the 'word of God', believing that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, by virtue of the fact that they are the most recent revelation from God, are the most relevant for today.

The many teachings revealed by Bahá'u'lláh cover every aspect of life and relations between humanity and creation. Among the most basic tenets is a belief in the unity and interconnectedness of all things: the singularity of God; the equality of the races, sexes and all humanity; and that the chief task facing humanity is the construction of a just and merciful world-embracing civilization.

The pursuit of unity is reflected in the Faith's administrative order which includes elected local, regional, national and international administrative bodies. The worldwide headquarters of the Faith is located on Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel - the final resting place of the remains of The Bab.

Bahá'ís believe unity should also characterize the relationship between

humanity and the natural environment created by an all-powerful God. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh , "Ye are all the fruits of one tree, the leaves of one branch." [1] From the Bahá'í perspective, humanity is both physically and metaphorically linked to the world. In a letter written in 1933, Shoghi Effendi, a direct descendant of Bahá'u'lláh and known as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith wrote: 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. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions. [2]

Bahá'ís recognize that the world is undergoing rapid socio-economic transitions that make the protection of the environment and sustainable development both critical and challenging. Bahá'ís believe that only an integrated, balanced and comprehensive world view with a belief in a divine creator and unity of purpose will resolve environmental and development challenges. For example, when science and technology don't serve a divinely ordained purpose, they will actually contribute to the erosion of the planet's biodiversity. Materialistic civilization that replaces the idea of the `citizen' with the `consumer' cannot concern itself with the long-term viability of life on earth.

The Interconnectedness of Humanity and the Earth

The Bahá'í view on environmental conservation and sustainable development holds that: a) because the natural universe is a reflection of the majestic qualities and attributes of the Supreme Being, it inspires and should be accorded the utmost respect; b) all of creation is interconnected; c) that the unity of humanity is the essential truth and compelling force in this age. Of this, Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "The earth is but one county, and mankind its citizens." [3] The concepts of world citizenship, prudent stewardship of the earth, and the interconnectedness of all things is the essence of the Bahá'í Faith.

Abdu'l Bahá (tr. Servant of the Glory), the son of Bahá'u'lláh amplified this point: For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever. . . [4]

In another reference, he remarked: Cooperation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness. [5]

At the very heart of the Bahá'í view of the relationship between humanity and the natural universe is the belief that all of creation is an expression of the many names and attributes of an all-powerful God. Like the many different

attributes of God, the natural realm has diverse "causes" or ideal environments in which it flourishes and expresses itself. Life is tenacious and can adapt itself to such diverse climates as polar, temperate, tropical and desert. Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world.[6]

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. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognisant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. . .[7]

Yet, while nature is seen as the repository of the many attributes of God, Bahá'ís are not pantheists. They do not worship nature or hold it in high esteem for its own sake. The natural realm exists to serve a humanity that has as its task the carrying forward of an ever-evolving divinely ordained world order that will usher in universal peace and harmony. As such, Bahá'ís believe that humanity must act as a wise steward of the natural realm, though neither nature nor humanity is at the core of the universal design. Rather, it is God.

The Environmental Challenge & Solutions

Just as humanity, the environment and spirituality are all inter-connected, so too are the factors that have led to the environmental challenges. Speaking on behalf of the worldwide community of Bahá'ís, the Bahá'í International Community (BIC) office at the United Nations issued a statement making this point in 1998: None of these problems -- the debilitating inequities of development, the apocalyptic threats of atmospheric warming and ozone depletion, the oppression of women, the neglect of children and marginalized peoples, to name but a few -- can be realistically addressed without considering all the others. None can be fully addressed without a magnitude of cooperation and coordination at all levels that far surpasses anything in humanity's collective experience.[8]

According to the Bahá'í International Community, the unfettered exploitation of planetary natural resources is one symptom of a "sickness of the human spirit". Thus, any lasting solution to the environmental and developmental challenges will need to recognize the spiritual nature of each human, the interdependency of all humans, and their relationship with the environment. In other words, development will need to be more than simply for short-term economic advantage; it must also further and benefit the minds and spirits of all humanity.

Clearly, cooperation between all peoples, governments and agencies will be required to effect lasting solutions to the environmental challenges. However,

the Bahá'í International Community points to certain trends in the world which tend to undermine the very foundations of collaboration. Among these it includes: . . .the widespread lack of moral discipline, the glorification of greed and material accumulation, the increasing breakdown of family and community, the rise of lawlessness and disorder, the ascendancy of racism and bigotry, and the priority given to national interests over the welfare of humanity -- all of which destroy confidence and trust, the foundations of collaboration.[9]

It is the Bahá'í position that only the abandonment of these destructive trends will create the necessary setting in which the spiritualization of humanity can be realized and the consequent unity and cooperation between humans can develop solutions to meet the environmental challenges. Such qualities include love, compassion, forbearance, trustworthiness, courage, humility, co-operation and willingness to sacrifice for the common good -- qualities of an enlightened citizenry, able to construct a unified world civilization.[10]

The Nature of Sustainable Development

Development, in the Bahá'í view, is an organic process in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material." [11] As with the environmental challenge, the Bahá'í view calls for ground-up organic answers that are consistent with the development of the spirituality of all people.

For example, community growth and development will need to respond to the genuine need of all people to have close contact with the natural world. This will influence all aspects of development - from design and engineering to community and land-use planning. Primary among these will be the need for carefully planned maintenance of agricultural lands.

Bahá'ís believe that science and technology can only provide the answers to sustainable development when they take into account the needs of the human soul. For example, there is little value in building high-efficiency vast networks of concrete roads if the style of architecture blocks sunlight, prevents people from walking and generally leaves the human being dwarfed. The vast forces of science and technology must be harnessed to serve the material, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of the entire human family. This will require that all peoples be involved in generating scientific knowledge and determining its applications. As participation increases, technologies which have tended to desensitize and alienate, to make satisfying work and crafts redundant, to destroy the environment, and to cause sickness, infirmity or death, will, no doubt, be reconsidered, redesigned or abandoned.[12]

Stewardship, from a Bahá'í point of view means that the value of nature and its

preservation cannot be expressed in sheer economic terms. A more balanced approach to sustainable development can only result when planners have a deep understanding of the significance of the natural realm in the material and spiritual development of all humanity.

Consequently, good stewardship and prudent management of the earth's resources is not merely an "add-on" that is developed in response to a paucity of the resources, but rather an essential and fundamental responsibility that must be given fullest consideration at all times. Good stewardship doesn't involve "rescuing" nature from environmental disasters: it involves long-term planning that minimizes any possibilities of such emergencies occurring.

Material development which serves solely an economic master is not a model favored by the Bahá'ís. They believe the diverse peoples of the world will be more inclined to support development policies and programs based on spiritual principles and the inherent dignity of the human being. As such, they have proposed that spiritual indicators be applied to measure the value of development in terms of its impact on the spiritual, cultural and social advancement of humanity.

These indicators are drawn from the essential teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. For example, one of the main tenets of the Bahá'í Faith is that men and women are equal. Bahá'ís believe that just and sustainable development will only be possible when women worldwide are welcomed as equal co-partners in every field of endeavor. For Bahá'ís, the commitment to the emancipation of women is not a recent development nor is equality of the sexes a vague ideal. It is our conviction that the unification of the human race depends on the establishment of the equality of men and women.[13]

Another of the Bahá'í development indicators concerns the equitable distribution of wealth. One of the basic tenets of the Bahá'í Faith is the need to redress the extremes of wealth and poverty whereby absolute impoverishment and lavish luxury are virtually side by side. Experts tell us that there are enough resources in the world to meet the needs of all humanity. Therefore, to eliminate poverty, we will need to find more equitable methods of distribution and we will need to moderate excessive and sometimes wasteful consumption and the accumulation of wealth for its own sake. At the same time, nations will need to develop fair and equitable trade relations built on the principle that the trading partners are true equals.

If development is to be sustainable, the Bahá'ís suggest the following:

Wealth is most commendable, provided the entire population is wealthy. If, however, a few have inordinate riches while the rest are impoverished, and no fruit or benefit accrues from that wealth, then it is only a liability to its possessor. If, on the other hand, it is expended for the promotion of knowledge, the founding of elementary and other schools, the encouragement of art and industry, the training of orphans and the poor - in brief, if it is dedicated to the welfare of society - its possessor will stand out before God and man as the most excellent of all who live on earth and will

be accounted as one of the people of paradise.[14]

Universal education is one of the requirements that will speed the advent of a world united to promote common cause. Education that promotes a 'world consciousness' and the understanding that there is an integral connection between every human being will create the conditions in which humanity is united to meet the environmental and developmental challenges.

Unity is a prerequisite for any effort to safeguard the earth's habitat. The type of unity envisioned by the Bahá'ís encompasses much more than just geography, climatology or biology. Rather, it is the outgrowth of an undying belief that humanity is one world community. In such a community, it seems only logical that matters of economic relations and sustainable development must be addressed with a balanced universal perspective that takes into account the world's many cultures and resources.

Proposed Courses of Action

Calling on principles enunciated in the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, whom Bahá'ís regard as the messenger and prophet from God for this age of humanity, the Bahá'ís of the world have proposed specific courses of action that will protect the environment and define the parameters of sustainable development. Over one hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh called for an international legal system, sharing of the world's resources, a re-alignment of the world's economic and governmental relations, and reform in the behavior and patterns of human consumption.

Drawing on these teachings, the Bahá'í International Community prepared a statement for the proposed "Earth Charter" for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992. In the document, the Bahá'ís outlined the process for achieving universally acceptable standards: It is our conviction that any call to global action for environment and development must be rooted in universally accepted values and principles. Similarly, the search for solutions to the world's grave environmental and developmental problems must go beyond technical-utilitarian proposals and address the underlying causes of the crisis. Genuine solutions, in the Bahá'í view, will require a globally accepted vision for the future, based on unity and willing cooperation among the nations, races, creeds, and classes of the human family. Commitment to a higher moral standard, equality between the sexes, and the development of consultative skills for the effective functioning of groups at all levels of society will be essential.[15]

They proposed that representatives of the world's religions be assembled, possibly under the auspices of the World Bank or the United Nations Development Program, to consult about spiritual principles and their impact on both the individual and the progress of society.[16] Such an assemblage, the Bahá'ís believe,

could reach common agreement on a limited number of spiritual principles and how these would provide a basis for developing policy priorities. Based on this agreement, goals and benchmarks for progress would be established and monitored by the organization under whose auspices the assemblage is convened.

The Bahá'ís believe that the world religions can take the initiative and collaborate because of the common thread that unites all of the world's major religious traditions. The changes required to reorient the world toward a sustainable future imply degrees of sacrifice, social integration, selfless action, and unity of purpose rarely achieved in human history. These qualities have reached their highest degree of development through the power of religion. Therefore, the world's religious communities have a major role to play in inspiring these qualities in their members, releasing latent capacities of the human spirit and empowering individuals to act on behalf of the planet, its peoples, and future generations.[17]

Furthermore, the cooperation of an international development agency would signal their recognition of the significance of the spiritual dimension of human nature. Already the internationally accepted Agenda 21 and The Habitat Agenda have acknowledged that the spiritual needs of the individual and of society are significant factors in human progress and are inseparable from ecological, economic, social, and cultural development.

The next step would involve the development of consultative processes on both the national and local levels whereby communities would be encouraged to utilize and develop their own independent spiritual measures for action, derived from the larger plan. Such plans and policies would likely have the backing of many and would receive the formalized support of religious authorities and institutions.

In a reflection of the Bahá'í administrative order which has no clergy but devolves responsibility on each individual right down to the local community, the Faith stresses the importance of local action in any initiatives.

Development must be decentralized in order to involve communities in formulating and implementing the decisions and programs that affect their lives. Such a decentralization need not conflict with a global system and strategy, but would in fact ensure that developmental processes are adapted to the planet's rich cultural, geographic, and ecological diversity.[18]

Bahá'ís believe that the individual has a key role in the unfolding of a planetary system of sustainable development. Therefore, acknowledging the spiritual dimension of humanity and providing for the moral, emotional, physical and intellectual development and education of each person will be a building block toward a new vision of planetary society.

To meet the environmental and development challenges, Bahá'ís affirm that the top-down model of community development will need to give way to a more participatory, knowledge-based and values-driven process of governance. When people view the decision-making process as something they own - not as a remote

and Byzantine system of laws - they will accept their responsibility for shaping a new world.

At the very core of the environmental and developmental crises facing humanity, Bahá'ís believe, there is a lack of moral leadership that pervades every level

of decision making - from the highest levels of government to the family unit itself. This is evidenced by the constant discovery of political scandals that reveal a bankruptcy of real ethical leadership. Humanity may have even lost its ability to define and identify morality in leadership because of the barrage of messages that obfuscate and confuse the issue.

While the world's religions, development organizations, governments and individuals are all called upon to play a role in sustainable development, long-term solutions will require a new and integrated vision of global society. This vision, will have as its underpinnings and its charter, a new set of values based on the belief that all of humanity is one. For Bahá'ís, the very bedrock and hope for a sustainable new world order is the acceptance of the oneness of humanity. This principle will cause the restructuring of the world's administration to reflect the fact that the world is one nation. This does not mean that any culture or nation must abandon its distinctive identity. In fact, the entire principle of unity in diversity, which the Bahá'í Faith champions, supports and actively encourages each people's right to maintain, protect and uphold their distinctiveness in the face of the homogenizing influences of international capital.

In the Bahá'í view, world unity is not mutually exclusive of cultural diversity

and national autonomy. Each person can legitimately have a balanced sense of pride in his or her culture and national identity. However, every person is called to a broader notion of loyalty: the uplifting and progress of the human soul, of every human being and the entire world civilization. The Bahá'í approach emphasizes that the world is one nation and it calls for a universal auxiliary language, which may in the future prove to be English. The yet-to-be-determined auxiliary language will facilitate inter-cultural communication and will not replace peoples' own mother tongues. Each individual maintains the right to preserve his or her cultural identity and mother tongue. In the view of the Bahá'í International

Community, acceptance of the oneness of humanity is the first fundamental prerequisite for this reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind. Recognition of this principle does not imply abandonment of legitimate loyalties, the suppression of cultural diversity, or the abolition of national autonomy. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a far higher aspiration than has so far animated human efforts. It clearly requires the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It is inconsistent not only with any attempt to impose uniformity, but with any tendency towards excessive centralization. Its goal is well captured in the concept of "unity in diversity." [19]

The Bahá'í International Community believes that the change in consciousness that would be represented by the adoption of the term "world citizenship" is a prerequisite before the peoples of the planet can accept and promote a coordinated and reasonable approach to global sustainable development. The entire idea of world citizenship can only take hold when one accepts the inter-relatedness of all human beings, of the impact of their actions upon each other. It means that the world is no longer constituted of billions of discrete beings and scores of disconnected governments and trans-national corporations. With the advent of world citizenship, each accepts that his or her actions in any part of the globe is likely to have impacts well beyond the local or regional spheres of influence.

The Bahá'í understanding of the implications of world citizenship extend beyond simply a new passport or slogans: 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.[20]

The Bahá'í International Community says that the most effective method for promoting sustainable development is logically through adoption of world citizenship. They reason that the full meaning and import of world citizenship will have an impact on the way nations conduct themselves with each other. When humanity and its economic, social, and political orders are preoccupied with disunity, antagonism and rigid provincialism, the Bahá'ís submit there is no room for a concerted worldwide strategy on sustainable development. In other words, any effort to realize sustainable development can only be marginally successful without the animating principles of world citizenship and one world homeland. The prerequisites clearly call for harmony and unity amongst all the peoples and nations of the world.

In a paper entitled *World citizenship: A Global Ethic for Sustainable Development*, presented to the 1st session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 14-25 June 1993, the Bahá'í International Community reflected at length on the necessary first step of establishing the concept of world citizenship. They went so far as to lay out a plan for its introduction and the requisite actions of the world leaders. They should foster an ethic of service to the common good and convey an understanding of both the rights and the responsibilities of world citizenship.

Using the concept of world citizenship as an integrating theme, the United Nations should publicize its ideals, activities and goals, so that people come to understand the unique and vital role the UN plays in the world and, therefore, in their lives. Similarly, the UN should promote world citizenship in all its public activities, including celebrations of its historical milestones and tours of UN headquarters. Every UN document that deals with

sustainable development should also include this principle -- beginning with the preamble of the proposed Earth Charter. World citizenship must become the single most important point of ethical reference in all UN activities.

The services of the advertising industry should be enlisted to promote world citizenship.[21]

The Promise of a Better Future

The Bahá'ís believe that there are dual processes at work in the world: the one best characterized as spiritualizing, embryonic, and beneficial to humanity; the other is the decaying and destruction of institutions and ways of thinking that no longer serve an evolving worldwide civilization.

The Bahá'ís are optimistic that humanity will survive the serious environment challenges and development issues facing it. They believe that the covenant God made with Abraham and Noah and has renewed with every Messenger sent to humanity is evidence of the long-term viability of humanity. This does not, however, allow humanity to abdicate its stewardship responsibilities nor the huge commitment to persevere and make sacrifices and changes that will transform the world. Shoghi Effendi looked forward to this renewal of civilization: In such a world society... [t]he economic resources of the world will be organized, its sources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coordinated and developed, and the distribution of its products will be equitably regulated ...The enormous energy dissipated and wasted on war, whether economic or political, will be consecrated to such ends as will extend the range of human inventions and technical development, to the increase of the productivity of mankind, to the extermination of disease, to the extension of scientific research, to the raising of the standard of physical health, to the sharpening and refinement of the human brain, to the exploitation of the unused and unsuspected resources of the planet, to the prolongation of human life and to the furtherance of any other agency that can stimulate the intellectual, the moral and spiritual life of the entire human race.[22]

According to the Bahá'í International Community, it is the actions of governments, non-governmental organizations, the forces of capital, society in general, and significant individuals that will determine how quickly humanity arrives at a universal consensus for sustainable development. The onus is on every party to consciously and deliberately give a thorough evaluation to the meaning of the goals toward which they are working. This will ensure that all parties can be effective partners in progress. The Bahá'í International Community says that "clear goals, meaningful policies and standards, identified programs, and agreed upon indicators of progress are necessary if advancement toward humanity's common future is to be charted and regular corrections to that course determined and carried out." [23]

Bahá'í Action on Sustainable Development

Representing the world's Bahá'ís, the Bahá'í International Community office

at

the United Nations has played a prominent role in the various UN-sponsored summits on the environment and sustainable development. Exemplary among these, was the participation of The Bahá'í International Community in the Earth Summit

- the Rio de Janeiro Conference in June 1992.

The Bahá'ís focused on the Earth Charter which they felt was potentially the most significant document under consideration at Rio de Janeiro. In numerous languages they circulated nearly one million copies of the environmental and development statements of the Bahá'í International Community. In the opening paragraph of its presentation to a preparatory working group of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Bahá'í International Community wrote of the Charter: It could offer a unifying vision for the future and articulate the values upon which a peaceful, prosperous and harmonious world society could practically be constructed. In so doing, the Earth Charter could lift the context of deliberations on humanity's future to a new level -- to the level of principle. Only discourse at the level of principle has the power to invoke a moral commitment, which will, in turn, make possible the discovery of enduring solutions to the many challenges confronting a rapidly integrating human society. . . . the Earth Charter can tap a powerful source of individual and collective motivation, which will be essential for the reorientation of the world toward a sustainable future.[24]

The Bahá'í presentation to UNCED urged that the idea of the "oneness of humanity" should be proclaimed in the preamble to the Charter, which should then be taught in the world's schools and communicated worldwide in preparation for "the organic change in the structure of society which it implies." [25]

In fact, the landmark Peace Monument unveiled at the conclusion of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was an initiative of the Bahá'í International Community. At the Summit's closing ceremony, soil from some 40 nations was deposited into the striking five-meter high monument by children. Each year since the Summit, World Environment Day in Rio includes a ceremony at the monument during which soil from other nations is added. The inscription on the monument are the words of Bahá'u'lláh: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

Both Bahá'í communities and individual Bahá'ís are in the forefront of activities aimed at furthering preservation and sustainable development. Here is a small sample of projects Bahá'ís are involved with worldwide:

The establishment of a Bahá'í Office of the Environment as an adjunct of the Bahá'í International Community office at the United Nations.

Issuing a 1989 compilation of Bahá'í writings - Conservation of the Earth's Resources. The text has been studied by Bahá'í communities worldwide.

Numerous national and local Bahá'í communities have established their own environmental offices and committees, often in cooperation with like-minded organizations. In Japan, Canada, Brazil, Taiwan, Colombia, Philippines and other nations, Bahá'í communities have established curricula for education about the environment.

Nur University in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, an institution of higher learning established on Bahá'í principles, offers a Masters degree in Development.

A range of publications dealing with environmental and developmental issues is now published by Bahá'ís. This includes: One Country, a quarterly newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community; Ecologia Y Unidad Mundial, an Argentine Bahá'í newspaper; and others.

The Bahá'í Vocational Institute for Rural Women, located in India and the Clean and Beautiful Swaziland campaign founded by a Bahá'í - Dr. Irma Allen - both received Global 500 Awards from the United Nations Environment Program.

An organic farming project by the Bahá'í community of Japan teaches how to grow food without artificial fertilizers or pesticides.

In rural Kenya, a Bahá'í-sponsored development project encourages and empowers village women to develop their own entrepreneurial weaving businesses.

In Bolivia and Malaysia, Bahá'í communities have launched fish farming projects.

Bahá'ís in the United Kingdom, the Philippines, Singapore and Taiwan have all organized and/or sponsored arts and educational activities geared to creating awareness of the fragile environment and conservation.

Local Bahá'í communities in the UK have become active proponents of Local Agenda 21, working with partner groups and with local authorities.

Working in collaboration with other organizations, the Bahá'í International Community hosted two World Forestry Charter Gatherings (1989 & 1994).

The Bahá'í International Community made a formal presentation to the "World Faiths and Development Dialogue" hosted by the President of the World Bank and the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace during the Lambeth Conference, February 1998.

Finally, as if to address directly the very issue of environmental biodiversity and sustainable growth, the architecture and landscaping of each of the Bahá'í

Holy Sites around the world is a model of the blending of natural and architectural beauty, efficiency and diversity. Each of these sites features a diverse range of flora to reflect the Faith's teachings about diversity and the

buildings are designed to complement and augment their surroundings.

Notes:

[1] Bahá'u'lláh. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976,

Section CXXXII, page 288.

[2] Shoghi Effendi, Letter to an individual Bahá'í, through his secretary, 17 February 1933

[3] Bahá'u'lláh. Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976, section CXVII, page 250.

[4] Abdu'l Bahá (1982) Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l Bahá. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, section 137, page 157.

[5] Abdu'l Bahá. From a hitherto untranslated tablet.

[6] Bahá'u'lláh (1982) Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh. Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, page 142.

[7] Bahá'u'lláh (1979) Epistle to the Son of the Wolf. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, page 44.

[8] Bahá'í International Community (1998) Valuing Spirituality in Development. UN.

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[12] Bahá'í International Community (1997) Sustainable Communities in an Integrating World. UN.

[13] Bahá'í International Community (1998) Women and Men: Partnership for a Healthy Planet. UN.

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[15] Bahá'í International Community (1997) Earth Charter. UN.

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- [23] Bahá'í International Community (1998)
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- [24] Bahá'í International Community (1997)
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title

date

tags

adv. search

languages

inventory

bibliography

abbreviations

links

about

contact

RSS

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