

# Religions for biological diversity



On 25 and 26 February 2015 ninety representatives of nine religious communities met for the first time in Bonn, Germany, with experts from nature conservation bodies, scientific institutions and government agencies; they drew up and subsequently signed the following Joint Declaration. The ideas set out in the Declaration are to be implemented by the Abrahamic Forum in Germany. This work is sponsored by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

# Joint Declaration

Life is diversity. Human life is part of biological diversity and the development, change and dynamics to which it is subject. Humans need the manifold products and services of nature as the foundation for a happy and meaningful existence. Safeguarding and conserving the beauty and abundance of nature and its associated ecological services is therefore one of the core tasks of all humans.

We are currently witnessing a dramatic decline in the diversity of ecosystems and species and in genetic diversity – the number of species of plants, animals and other organisms is declining steadily. We are on the threshold of a global extinction on a geological scale caused mainly by humans in affluent countries, but also by rich people in poorer parts of the world. The process is being driven by forms of economic activity, production and consumption that over-exploit resources and also by social injustice and the lack of peace in the world. Climate change is a related phenomenon which is also of serious concern for nature and biological diversity. People are losing their means of livelihood and being forced to flee.

Respecting and preserving the integrity of nature is one of the key messages of the world's religions, which have for thousands of years handed on creation stories and laid down rules and behaviour patterns for dealing with nature. They have pointed out the limits to growth, for instance in the stories of Noah's Ark and the Tower of Babel. Religions are constantly exploring what nature means for our understanding of the world, of life and of God. Although religions may differ in their teaching and practices, safeguarding nature and its diversity is a common and constant task for all of them. Interfaith collaboration helps us get to know one another better and promotes peace among people and with nature.

Conserving biological diversity involves many practical steps both large and small. With this Declaration we provide some concrete starting points for swift and concerted action by religious communities and nature conservation groups:

- As part of the annual ecumenical season of Creation Tide that begins on 1 September we shall be working together after the first Friday in September on the idea of a religious week during which issues of nature conservation and biological diversity will be considered.
- There should be greater emphasis on shaping outdoor areas around buildings such as synagogues, temples, churches, mosques, cemeteries and cemeteries as places of biological diversity. The buildings themselves and the intercultural gardens that are being established in many towns and cities should be considered in the same way.
- Religious teams for nature conservation and biological diversity should be set up to describe and explain to faith groups, schools and other educational institutions the shared responsibility for safeguarding and conserving nature, in awareness of differences in traditions and world view.
- For these and other tasks it would be helpful to set up a network of religions for nature conservation.

We want to make people aware that everybody can do something to conserve biological diversity and thus help to preserve nature for future generations. State initiatives can provide back-up for this as well as starting points for joint undertakings. We support the German government's National Strategy on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011-2020, which aim to inform people of the value of biological diversity and raise awareness of it across society. In addition, there is a need for further structural and statutory regulation to promote nature protection and species conservation activities and curb damaging behaviour.

The signatories consider a commitment to biological diversity and our natural heritage to be one of the major challenges of this century.

Sixty religious communities, conservation institutions, scientists, experts and representatives of government agencies signed this joint declaration by the dialogue forum convening from 25 to 26 February 2015 in Bonn, Germany. The Abrahamic Forum in Germany is implementing the recommendations made in this declaration from 15 November 2016 onwards. This work is financed up to 31 December 2019 by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funds from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). It is sponsored by the Centre for Social Responsibility of the Protestant Church in Hessen and Nassau (EKHN).

**Further information is available from the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)**

Tel. +49 - 228 - 849 10

email: Religion-und-Natur@bfn.de

[https://www.bfn.de/religionen\\_und\\_natur.html](https://www.bfn.de/religionen_und_natur.html)

<http://www.bfn.de/>

<http://www.biologischevielfalt.de/>

<http://www.undekade-biologischevielfalt.de/>

**Issued by the Abrahamic Forum in Germany**

Goebelstr. 21, D-64293 Darmstadt, Germany

Tel. +49-6151 - 33 99 71

email: info@abrahamisches-forum.de

<http://www.abrahamisches-forum.de>

Published in January 2017

Supported by:



Federal Ministry for the  
Environment, Nature Conservation,  
Building and Nuclear Safety



Federal Agency  
for Nature  
Conservation



based on a decision of the German Bundestag

Cover image taken from the "Click into Biodiversity" photo competition held by the UN Decade on Biodiversity. Anna Harzheim, "Relaxation in the forest".