

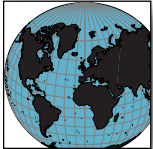


ONE COUNTRY

“The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens” – Bahá’u’lláh

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Newsletter of the Bahá’í
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July-September 2002
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In Johannesburg, a shift in emphasis on sustainable development

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, governments reaffirm the basic agenda of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio while stressing an urgent need to fight poverty; a new partnership with civil society is forged

JOHANNESBURG — Since the term “sustainable development” was coined in the late 1980s by the World Commission on Environment and Development, many have identified a distinct tension between the two halves of the phrase, with the need to promote development on the one hand, and the need to protect the environment on the other.

At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the environmental side of the “sustainable development” equation emerged as the main focus. While poverty eradication was mentioned, the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, the main documents agreed to in 1992, stressed the importance of protecting the natural environment, by establishing a “global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth’s ecosystem.”

But the final documents agreed to by governments at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the 10-year follow-up to Rio held here 26 August–4 September 2002, are much more focused on poverty eradication and attendant concerns, such as water supply, food and agriculture, and the need to generate more energy (albeit as cleanly as possible).

“The deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability,” states the Johannesburg Declaration, the Summit’s

Summit, continued on page 8



South African President Thabo Mbeki welcomes delegates to the World Summit on Sustainable Development at the Ubuntu Village on 25 August 2002 (UN Photo).



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Religion and Development at the Crossroads: Convergence or Divergence?

[Editor's Note: The following is a slightly edited version of the statement of the Bahá'í International Community to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The full statement can be read at: <http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/02-0826.htm>]

Over the course of the 20th century, ethnic, racial and national prejudices have increasingly given way to the recognition that humankind is a single family and the earth its common homeland. The United Nations, which was created in response to this dawning recognition, has worked tirelessly to bring about a world where all peoples and nations can live together in peace and harmony. To help bring about this world, the UN has crafted a remarkable framework of international institutions, processes, conventions and global action plans that have helped to prevent conflict and warfare, to protect human rights, to nurture equality between women and men, and to uplift the material conditions of countless individuals and communities.

Despite these significant achievements, the United Nations (UN) has yet to grasp fully both the constructive role that religion can play in creating a peaceful and prosperous global order, and the destructive impact that religious fanaticism can have on the stability and progress of the world. This lack of attention to religion can be clearly seen in the development realm, where the United Nations has, for the most part, viewed religious communities merely as channels for the delivery of goods and services, and as mechanisms to carry out development policies and programs. Moreover, while the United Nations' human rights machinery has been used to condemn religious intolerance and persecution, UN development policies and programs have hardly begun to address religious bigotry as a major obstacle to peace and well-being.

It is becoming increasingly clear that passage to the culminating stage in the millennia long process of the organization of the planet as one home for the entire human family cannot be accomplished in a

spiritual vacuum. Religion, the Bahá'í Scriptures aver, "is the source of illumination, the cause of development and the animating impulse of all human advancement" and "has been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind." It is the source of meaning and hope for the vast majority of the planet's inhabitants, and it has a limitless power to inspire sacrifice, change and long-term commitment in its followers. It is, therefore, inconceivable that a peaceful and prosperous global society – a society which nourishes a spectacular diversity of cultures and nations – can be established and sustained without directly and substantively involving the world's great religions in its design and support.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the power of religion has also been perverted to turn neighbor against neighbor. The Bahá'í Scriptures state that "religion must be the source of fellowship, the cause of unity and the nearness of God to man. If it rouses hatred and strife, it is evident that absence of religion is preferable and an irreligious man is better than one who professes it." So long as religious animosities are allowed to destabilize the world, it will be impossible to foster a global pattern of sustainable development: the central goal of this Summit.

Given the record of religious fanaticism, it is understandable that the United Nations has been hesitant to invite religion into its negotiations. However, the UN can no longer afford to ignore the immeasurable good that religions have done and continue to do in the world, or the far-reaching contributions that they can make to the establishment of a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable global order. Indeed, the United Nations will only succeed in establishing such a global order to the extent that it taps into the power and vision of religion. To do so will require accepting religion not merely as a vehicle for the delivery and execution of development initiatives, but as an active partner in the conceptualization, design, implementation and evaluation of global policies and programs. The historically justified wall separating the United Nations and religions must fall to the imperatives of a

world struggling toward unity and justice.

The real onus, however, is on the religions themselves. Religious followers and, more important, religious leaders must show that they are worthy partners in the great mission of building a sustainable world civilization. To do so will require that religious leaders work conscientiously and untiringly to exorcise religious bigotry and superstition from within their faith traditions. It will necessitate that they embrace freedom of conscience for all people, including their own followers, and renounce claims to religious exclusivity and finality.

It should not be imagined that the acceptance of religion as a partner within the United Nations will be anything but gradual or that religious hostilities will be eliminated any time soon. But the desperate needs of the human family make further delay in addressing the role of religion unacceptable.

For its part, the United Nations might begin the process of substantively involving religion in deliberations on humankind's future by hosting an initial gathering of religious leaders convoked, perhaps, by the Secretary-General. As a first priority, the leaders might call for a convention on freedom of religion and belief to be drafted and ratified, as expeditiously as possible, by the governments of the world, with the assistance of religious communities. Such an action by the world's religious leaders, which would signal their willingness to accept freedom of conscience for all peoples, would significantly reduce tensions in the world. The gathering might also discuss the foundation within the United Nations System of

a permanent religious forum, patterned initially perhaps on the UN's recently founded Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The creation of this body would be an important initial step toward fully integrating religion into the UN's work of establishing a peaceful world order.

For their part, religious leaders will need to show that they are worthy of participation in such a forum. Only those religious leaders who make it clear to their followers that prejudice, bigotry and violence have no place in the life of a religious person should be invited to participate in the work of this body.

It is evident that the longer the United Nations delays the meaningful involvement of religion in its work, the longer humanity will suffer the ravages of injustice and disunity. It is equally clear that until the religions of the world renounce fanaticism and work wholeheartedly to eliminate it from within their own ranks, peace and prosperity will prove chimerical. Indeed, the responsibility for the plight of humanity rests, in large part, with the world's religious leaders. It is they who must raise their voices to end the hatred, exclusivity, oppression of conscience, violations of human rights, denial of equality, opposition to science, and glorification of materialism, violence and terrorism, which are perpetrated in the name of religious truth. Moreover, it is the followers of all religions who must transform their own lives and take up the mantle of sacrifice for and service to the well-being of others, and thus contribute to the realization of the long-promised reign of peace and justice on earth.*

It is becoming increasingly clear that passage to the culminating stage in the millennia long process of the organization of the planet as one home for the entire human family cannot be accomplished in a spiritual vacuum.

Bahá'ís in Chile announce call for Temple designs

SANTIAGO, Chile, 12 September 2002 (BWNS) — The national governing body of the Bahá'í community in Chile has called for submission of designs for a continental House of Worship, to be built southeast of Santiago. The building will be the eighth Bahá'í House of Worship in the world.

The announcement letter, from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Chile, specifies some of the design requirements of the building. Like all of the other Bahá'í temples, it must be nine-sided and lit naturally. It should also have an auditorium capable of seating 500-600 people, and a dome of a height of "40 to 45 meters." Design submissions should also include basic landscaping features. The surrounding gardens are a

key feature of the other Temples.

The design of each of the existing Temples has been unique, and most are reflective of the culture of the land in which they have been built. The most recognizable of the Bahá'í Houses of Worship throughout the world is the "Lotus Temple" in New Delhi, which has won many architectural awards for its design, modelled after a lotus flower.

Funding for the construction will be provided by the Bahá'ís in Chile and voluntary donations from local and national Bahá'í communities around the world. Though Bahá'í Houses of Worship are open to all, the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith prohibit acceptance of funds from non-members.*

In Bolivia, an isolated village seeks to establish its own school system in the face of discrimination

Students in the fifth grade at the Puka Puka village school. The teacher is paid for by the community itself, through various fund-raising projects, most of which have been organized by the Bahá'í community of Puka Puka.



Although largely composed of illiterate farmers, the community of Puka Puka now manages an extended school system, with some 140 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. It is a remarkable tale of grassroots development.

PUKA PUKA, Chuquisaca, Bolivia — For many years, the Government-run school in this village of some 700 people on the Bolivian altiplano offered only kindergarten through third grade. Students who wanted any kind of education beyond that had to walk from 3 to 6 kilometers to one of several nearby towns.

The young students mostly didn't mind the distance. But they did object to the treatment they received in the other places. All members of the Quechua indigenous people, the students were forced by teachers elsewhere to wear Western clothes instead of their traditional tribal dress.

"It is important to wear our clothes, because we don't want to forget our culture," said Pascual Vargas, a 17-year-old Puka Puka native.

So the people of Puka Puka did something quite unusual: they started up their own school, first raising money to hire

teachers for grades four through eight and then establishing a private high school for those students who wanted to continue.

The story of how the community of Puka Puka came to take that initiative, and how it has continued to manage and finance the schools, is a tale of genuine grassroots development. After identifying the problem, the community itself came up with a solution and proceeded largely on its own to implement it, seeking external help where necessary but remaining essentially in control.

Although largely composed of illiterate farmers, the community now manages an extended school system, with an enrollment of some 140 students in kindergarten through eighth grade — a remarkable achievement in this underdeveloped region, itself in one of the poorest countries in Latin America. The more recently established high school has about 30 stu-

dents in grades nine and ten.

By all accounts, the underlying motivation for these projects and their sustaining potency stem from the practice of the Bahá'í Faith by about one-third of the people here. The Faith's emphasis on education and unity supplied the vision for advancement and a process for empowerment, said local leaders and outside observers.

"The desire for our own school was born in the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Puka Puka," said Claudio Limachi, 35, a native of the village who has been involved in the school project since its beginning. "The Assembly didn't want the community's children to suffer any more.

"And they had often studied the quotation from the Bahá'í writings that says when the indigenous peoples of the Americas are educated, they will become 'so illumined as to enlighten the whole world.' So to help fulfill that promise, we established the school," said Mr. Limachi, who was among the first to embrace the Bahá'í Faith in Puka Puka and who is now a leading figure in the community.

On the Altiplano

Puka Puka is located about 6 kilometers south of Tarabuco, which is the capital in the province of Yamparaéz, in the state of Chuquisaca. It lies in the zone known as the "altiplano" — the almost desert-like high plateau in the Andes Mountains of Bolivia and Peru. Virtually all its inhabitants are Quechua, members of a sub-group known as known as "Ayllu" or "Tarabuqueño," and almost all are farmers, growing potato, wheat, barley, beans, green peas, and corn.

The region is also marked by an austere beauty: weathered rolling hills, climbing into craggy mountains, covered with a green baize, dotted with cattle and terra-cotta-roofed adobe houses in the valleys. But the altitude, scarcity of fertile soil and lack of water make it hard to prosper here.

For years, the community had undertaken various projects aimed at improving its lot. Some years ago, residents said, they shared a tractor — donated by an international aid agency — with two other communities. But infighting over how to split the use of the machine led to the collapse of the project.

For the current project, the community was successful at attracting aid for the construction of several school buildings and in obtaining government salaries for teachers covering kindergarten through third grade.

Sending children in the upper grades to schools in the surrounding communities, however, was a concern.

"In one town, Mishka Mayo, we had trouble because the school was Catholic and we felt there was religious discrimination," said Mr. Limachi. "Schools officials would force the students to participate in religious festivals in which there would be lots of alcohol, and when they refused, they were punished physically, with a paddle."

The discrimination, said Mr. Limachi and others, stemmed largely from the fact that a number of families in Puka Puka had become Bahá'ís — who are, incidentally, forbidden to drink alcohol as part of their faith. A few residents first accepted the Bahá'í Faith in 1980, and they gradually taught its principles to their friends and families. Today, of the some 700 residents in Puka Puka, about 300 are Bahá'ís.

It was the emphasis on education in the Bahá'í Faith that led the community to establish its own school system — that and an interesting intervention by the community's young people, also sparked by the Bahá'í teachings.

Although many residents became Bahá'ís in the 1980s and 1990s, they did not immediately give up their old ways. Many adults, for example, continued to drink alcohol. Then, in 1997, at a Bahá'í meeting, the community's young people challenged their parents to stop drinking entirely, suggesting that instead they contribute the money spent on alcohol to a fund for education.

In response, the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Puka Puka, the locally elected Bahá'í governing council, decided that year to raise US\$500 and to hire a

"Schools officials would force the students to participate in religious festivals in which there would be lots of alcohol, and when they refused, they were punished physically, with a paddle."

– Claudio Limachi

The village of Puka Puka has about 700 inhabitants, spread out in widely separated homes. Shown below is the village center, including the school buildings, visible at the center of the photograph.



Members of the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Puka Puka consult with visitors about their plans for improving education in the community. The Assembly is the locally elected Bahá'í governing council; in Puka Puka, it was responsible for initiating many of the education plans.



“Part of the story is about how a little community with no access to resources was able to reach out and raise resources. Most other communities will wait for an international agency or NGO to arrive on their doorstep with the programs. But the Puka Puka community took the initiative....”

– Duncan Hanks

teacher for the Bahá'í students.

Very quickly, however, the members of the Assembly — many of whom are also leaders in the community at large — decided that all levels of schooling should be available to everyone in Puka Puka. So they enlisted the help of other community organizations and raised money to hire three extra teachers, enough to cover grades five, six, and eight. (They were not able to fund the seventh grade immediately.)

The money was raised in various ways. Not only was a portion of what had been spent on alcohol contributed, but the local farmers' association donated a portion of its potato sales to the school that first year. Such donations continued in subsequent years. As well, outside agencies, such as Nur University, a Bahá'í-inspired institution in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, took note of the community's desire to help itself and began to assist in various ways.

“Part of the story is about how a little community with no access to resources was able to reach out and raise resources,” said Duncan Hanks, director of social and economic development projects at Nur University.

“Most other communities will wait for an international agency or NGO to arrive on their doorstep with the programs. But the Puka Puka community didn't sit and wait. They took the initiative to go out and say ‘this is what we need and now we're going to figure out how to get the resources.’

“The reason why they are able to do

that kind of outreach is because they are Bahá'ís and connected to the worldwide Bahá'í community.

“This is redefining oneness,” added Mr. Hanks. “They are part of this global community because they have chosen to be.”

A sense of unity

The practice of the Bahá'í Faith has empowered the community in other ways, say community members and outside observers. In addition to connecting them with a wider network, it has promoted a sense of unity in the community itself, a unity that extends to other religious groups and has helped make possible the level of cooperation necessary to establish the schools.

“Before, we used to have drunken parties and we used to fight more among ourselves,” said Cecilo Vela, 30, the treasurer of the Puka Puka Spiritual Assembly. “But since the Faith has come, we have become united — the Catholics, evangelicals, and Bahá'ís — and now we are working to get an education for our children.

“We feel like we are one family, and it is as if someone were above and directing us with one hand,” Mr. Vela added, noting that community meetings generally start with prayers, read by members of all the different religions in the village.

Constancio Quispe, a 39-year-old Catholic in Puka Puka, confirmed that members of other religions share the sense of new possibilities.

"It would all fall apart if we weren't united," said Mr. Quispe, who serves as a catechism teacher. "The Bahá'ís united us and the Catholics understood that we can follow that way also.

"We all feel this way," he added. "We have meetings and we have talked about the unity created by the Bahá'ís."

Not only did the Bahá'ís initiate the community-wide effort to hire teachers for middle grades, they have themselves launched a high school program. Called the "Unidad de los Pueblos Collegio" (Unity of the People High School), the institution currently operates out of several rooms in Mr. Limachi's home, with an enrollment of about 30 students in ninth and tenth grades. So far, two teachers have been hired, at nominal salaries.

Although run by the Bahá'ís, the school is open to all. "I like to study in this school, because it is very good," said Faustino Quispe, 14, a student who is Catholic. Faustino said he feels no prejudice at the school. "We are all friends," he said.

Spin-off projects

The Bahá'í community of Puka Puka has initiated a number of small-scale income generating projects to help support the high school, including a beekeeping/honey-making project; a chicken-raising project, and a vegetable-growing/greenhouse project.

"It is an incredibly determined commu-

nity," said Jeremy Martin, another Nur University official who recently visited Puka Puka. "The community has now got all of the other nearby communities behind the high school project, and, although they do need money and support, they have this incredible vision that I think makes it sustainable."

Mr. Martin, who is Director of Institutional Development at Nur, noted that in addition to the schools and income projects, the community has also erected a building designed to house a small museum, dedicated to showcasing the community's history and culture.

"It's another thing they've done on their own initiative," said Mr. Martin, "and it indicates their level of self-awareness. On the one hand, they are developing a school system to give them the kinds of new knowledge they need to survive today, and they are also creating a museum as a means of conserving their traditional knowledge."

Indeed, many in the community spoke above all else of a shared vision of the future, when the opportunities created by the projects will allow their children to go to the university and become professionals.

"Then our children won't have the same difficulties as we do," said Bacilia Pachacopa, 35, a mother of five in Puka Puka. "We're doing this because we want our children to have capabilities so that they don't depend on others the way we do, and to show others that it is possible to make progress." *

"We're doing this because we want our children to have capabilities so that they don't depend on others the way we do, and to show others that it is possible to make progress."

– Bacilia Pachacopa



Two girls, 17-year-old Lidia Valle, right, and her friend, 20-year-old Felicia Yarwi, are both students in Unity of the People High School, recently established by the Bahá'í community of Puka Puka.

In Johannesburg, a shift in emphasis on sustainable development

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, important venues for the exchange of ideas were at side events, like this workshop sponsored by the International Environment Forum (IEF), a Bahá'í-inspired organization. Attended by more than 100 people, the workshop examined the possibilities for developing new indicators for sustainability.



Summit, continued from page one

The outcome at Johannesburg shows perhaps more than anything else how the global understanding of sustainable development has broadened and, in some ways, been redefined since the 1992 Earth Summit.

final political statement.

The Declaration also states that sustainable development is built on three “interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars” — economic development, social development, and environmental protection — which must be established “at local, national, regional and global levels.”

According to the United Nations, the Johannesburg Summit — as the WSSD came to be called — was the biggest ever UN conference, bringing together 104 heads of state and government. A total of 191 countries participated in the Summit, and some 21,340 accreditation passes were issued. Some 22,000 delegates also registered for the parallel Civil Society Forum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Much was expected from Johannesburg, especially in terms of concrete commitments

from governments. On that score, however, many were disappointed. By and large, the governments represented at Johannesburg mainly reaffirmed or reiterated commitments they had previously made at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and other recent UN conferences.

To be fair, some new targets were devised in the areas of fresh water protection, biodiversity, and the promotion of sanitation. And more than US\$25 billion in funding for development assistance and/or environmental projects was announced by governments around the world in connection with the Summit, according to the United Nations.

On another level, however, the Johannesburg Declaration and the Summit’s Plan of Implementation show perhaps more than anything else how the global understanding of sustainable development has broadened and, in some ways, been rede-

fined since Rio, particularly in terms of the links between poverty, environmental protection, and the use of natural resources.

"We reaffirm our pledge to place particular focus on, and give priority attention to, the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people," the Declaration said. "Among these conditions are: chronic hunger; malnutrition; foreign occupation; armed conflicts; illicit drug problems; organized crime; corruption; natural disasters; illicit arms trafficking; trafficking in persons; terrorism; intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds; xenophobia; and endemic, communicable and chronic diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis."

Sylvia Karlsson, science coordinator at the International Human Dimensions Program on Global Environmental Change, said both the process and text at Johannesburg show an increased awareness of the complexity of fostering sustainable development.

"This is true for the horizontal complexity across sectors and the so-called 'three pillars' of sustainable development, and for the vertical complexity, in terms of involvement of all governance levels, local, national, regional, and global," said Dr. Karlsson, who is also secretary of the Bahá'í-inspired International Environment Forum. "The Johannesburg Summit brings the decade of large conferences to a full circle, incorporating a greater realization of the interconnectedness of the issues facing humanity."

That sense of interconnectedness was echoed in the speeches of the heads of state and government gathered at the Summit.

"...[R]ecognition has grown that, indeed, the world has grown into a global village," said Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, who served as the Summit's chairman. "The survival of everybody in this village demands that we develop a universal consensus to act together to ensure that there is no longer any river that divides our common habitat into poor and wealthy parts."

"This indicates that the noble concept of human solidarity has, once again, regained currency as a driving force in the reconstruction and development of our common world," said President Mbeki in his speech at the start of the Summit.

Specific Targets

Reaffirming the general principles laid down 10 years ago in Rio, the main outcome document of Johannesburg also contains a number of specific targets and timetables designed to spur action on a wide range of issues. In addition to the Millennium Declaration goal to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day, the Johannesburg Plan aims to halve the proportion of people who lack access to clean water or proper sanitation by 2015, to restore depleted fisheries by 2015, to achieve a "significant reduction" in biodiversity loss by 2010, and to find means to use and produce chemicals in ways that minimize harm to human health and the environment by 2020.

The Plan also commits countries to increase the use of renewable energy "with a sense of urgency," although it does not set any target date for this. Many groups expressed disappointment that governments did not make more concrete promises on renewable energy — and many were disappointed that governments did not make firm commitments to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases.

Others said, however, that the mere fact that governments agreed to move with "urgency" towards renewable energy is signifi-

"Recognition has grown that, indeed, the world has grown into a global village. The survival of everybody in this village demands that we develop a universal consensus to act together to ensure that there is no longer any river that divides our common habitat into poor and wealthy parts."

– Thabo Mbeki,
President of South
Africa



WSSD Secretary-General Nitin Desai at the Summit's opening ceremony on 25 August 2002 (UN Photo).

Ethical and spiritual dimensions of sustainable development stressed by Bahá'ís at Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG — Representatives of the worldwide Bahá'í community were active in virtually all venues of the Johannesburg Summit, from the inter-governmental sessions at Sandton Center to informal workshops at the Civil Society Forum. But their message was nevertheless quite focused: recognize and incorporate the moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions of sustainable development.

In particular, the centerpiece of Bahá'í efforts at the Summit surrounded the presentation of a statement, prepared by the Bahá'í International Community, entitled "Religion and Development at the Crossroads: Convergence or Divergence?" [See page 2 for an edited version of the statement.]

"The statement raises a bold and challenging call to the UN and to the leaders of the world's religions," said Peter Adriance, the lead representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the Summit. "It asks the UN to more fully recognize the key role religion must play in the quest for sustainable development, and it calls on religious leaders to reject all forms of religious fanaticism as impediments to development and peace."

Some 30 representatives of six Bahá'í and Bahá'í-inspired organizations were accredited to the Summit. In addition to the Bahá'í International Community (an international non-governmental organization in consultative status with ECOSOC), representatives of the Bahá'í communities of Brazil, Canada, and South Africa sent del-

egates to the Summit. Two Bahá'í-inspired organizations, the European Bahá'í Business Forum (EBBF) and the International Environment Forum (IEF), were also accredited; the EBBF as a non-governmental organization and the IEF as a scientific organization.

Both the EBBF and IEF made particular contributions to the discussion on ethics and spirituality at the Summit, said Mr. Adriance. Each presented workshops and panel discussions on topics related to sustainable development and ethics at the Civil Society Forum and in side events near the Sandton Center. Workshop topics included Indicators for Sustainability, Integrating Science in Local Communities, Emerging Values for a Global Economy, and Value-Based Education for Sustainable Development. The IEF's workshop on Indicators for Sustainability was attended by more than 100 people.

The Bahá'í International Community and the Bahá'í Community of South Africa also created two exhibits, one for the Ubuntu Village and the other for the NGO Forum, which highlighted the Bahá'í approach to development, showcasing projects that reflect values and principles at "the heart of development," such as trustworthiness, the equality of women and men, and justice.

Mr. Adriance said the Bahá'í message about ethics and spirituality was well received.

"The ethical dimension of sustainable development was discussed at significant length by a wide range of participants," said Mr. Adriance, who was present not only in Rio de Janeiro for the 1992 Earth Summit but was also at the 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen and the 1996 Habitat II Summit in Istanbul. "It was acknowledged by heads of states in their speeches and discussed in a great number of workshops. The Earth Charter, which stresses the importance of values and ethics, was prominently featured in a number of venues and became a focal point for quite a bit of this discussion."

As well, Mr. Adriance said, many of the commitments made in the Plan of Implementation seek to address basic issues of justice and morality. "The documents could have been much stronger in this regard," said Mr. Adriance, "but we can take some satisfaction that ethical issues were discussed at the Summit, by many people, at all levels, who acknowledged their importance."*



More than 30 representatives of six Bahá'í and Bahá'í-inspired organizations were accredited to the Johannesburg Summit. Some posed here for a group photograph.

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cant. And they noted that Russia and Canada announced they would ratify the Kyoto Protocol of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, giving new life to that effort to reduce CO₂ emissions. As well, the decision to replenish the Global Environment Facility, which helps developing countries fund projects and programs that protect the global environment, with some US\$3 billion in funds, was seen as important.

Many noted that the decision to hold the Summit in Africa, the least-developed continent, in some ways foreshadowed the renewed emphasis on the development side of the sustainable development equation. And, certainly, the speeches of the African leaders were among the most powerful at Johannesburg.

"Agenda 21 was designed to achieve a balance between the needs of people and their environment, between the basic requirements of the living, and our inescapable, collective obligations to future generations," said Benjamin Mkapa, President of Tanzania.

"But the poor, the hungry and the diseased cannot be expected to put the preservation of their environment above their struggle to survive this very day," continued President Mkapa. "So they mine soil nutrients, cultivate steep slopes, cut trees for wood fuel, and overgraze range lands. Many of them know this is harmful to the environment. But, for them, it is not the quality of life that is at stake, it is life itself. For them, sustainability is a secondary concern; the primary one is to get the wheel of development turning, and turning faster."

Observed Halldor Thorgeirsson, senior negotiator at the WSSD for the Government of Iceland: "One of the things that happened at Johannesburg was the rift between the North and the South, between developed and developing countries, that has been growing somewhat deeper since Rio, has been turned around a little bit. I think after the Johannesburg outcome, cooperation is going to be easier."

Dr. Thorgeirsson noted that the emphasis on fighting poverty also came with an important *quid pro quo* — an emphasis throughout the final documents on good governance. "The document carries a direct expression of the need for developing countries to improve their governance, fight cor-

ruption, protect human rights and those things," he said. "It is maybe not a precondition for development assistance, but kind of part of the deal."

A new kind of partnership

Another key outcome of the Johannesburg Summit was clear acknowledgment that sustainable development cannot be achieved without widespread collaboration among all sectors of global society.

In this regard, many participants and observers hailed the creation of a set of new "Type II" partnerships between governments, business, and civil society as one of the key outcomes of the Summit.

Designed to stress practical collaboration on the front lines of environment and development, some 280 such partnerships were launched at the Summit. They include actions like those embodied in an initiative to collect bicycles in Europe to refurbish and sell in Africa, so as to reduce CO₂ and alleviate poverty. Or a plan involving Asian governments and wildlife groups aimed at recognizing and protecting landing sites for migratory birds. Or the creation of a public/private network in the South Pacific to help protect coral reefs and associated fisheries.

"In terms of long term significance of the Johannesburg process, it has established these new kinds of relationships, these new forms of networks and wider partnerships, that bring together the private sector, civil society, government, and international agencies to work together on practical projects that really seek to make a difference," said

A 3 September 2002 seminar on the Multiple Dimensions of Globalization featured, among others, Iraj Abedian, director and group economist, Standard Bank, Johannesburg, left, and Arthur Dahl, a former deputy assistant executive director for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The seminar was jointly sponsored by the European Bahá'í Business Forum and the International Environment Forum.





"Beyond Words," a performing arts troupe composed of Bahá'í youth from Albania, Cameroon, Canada, the Czech Republic, Ecuador, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, gave several performances at various venues at the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

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– Halldor Thorgeirsson, senior negotiator for Iceland

Arthur Dahl, a former deputy assistant executive director for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The term "Type II" is meant to set such agreements off from traditional "Type I" agreements that run government-to-government. The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 are considered to be Type I agreements, as are the Johannesburg Declaration and the Plan of Implementation.

"The partnership approach is definitely a step forward," said Dr. Thorgeirsson, suggesting it offers a way around the deadlock that sometimes emerges because of the traditional emphasis at the UN on reaching consensus.

"The consensus process in many cases ends up with a sort of lowest common denominator in terms of what can be done, and in some areas the international community has been paralyzed," said Dr. Thorgeirsson, who is head of international affairs at Iceland's Office of Sustainable Development. "What has happened with these partnerships is that we are breaking out of that a little bit, allowing those governments that agree on a certain set of actions to implement them — and also providing opportunities for the private sector and NGOs to work with them."

According to the UN, some US\$235 million have been pledged in the Type II partnerships so far announced.

Beyond the new Type II partnerships, efforts were made to facilitate significant contact between so-called "major groups" of civil society — academics, local authori-

ties, trade unions, scientists, businesses, indigenous people, women, and activist NGOs — and governments at all levels of the process.

The numbers tell part of the story. At Rio, only about 2,400 NGOs were accredited, in contrast to the some 8,000 representatives of major groups (including NGOs) accredited at Johannesburg.

As usual, the Summit featured a parallel NGO Forum, labeled the "Civil Society Forum." But at Johannesburg, the UN also created a third venue for interaction between governments and major groups at a place called the Ubuntu Village, which featured exhibits, cultural performances, and other events to help facilitate new partnerships for sustainable development.

As well, representatives of major groups were given fairly extensive time to address the Summit's main plenary sessions, and four special "Round Table" dialogues were held between heads of state, international agencies, and representatives of major groups.

"There was a lot of contact between groups who don't usually talk to each other," said Dr. Karlsson, noting that the Round Table sessions brought heads of state into direct contact with the heads of multinational corporations, top scientists, and NGO activists.

Indeed, another key difference between Rio and Johannesburg was the degree to which business leaders — and other groups, such as scientists and farmers — were present and involved. While many of the Type II partnerships are led by traditional environmental NGOs, many are led by large corporations — and, indeed, many involve extensive collaboration between both groups.

"Action starts with governments," said UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his speech to the Summit. "The richest countries must lead the way. They have the wealth. They have the technology. And they contribute disproportionately to global environmental problems. But governments cannot do it alone.

"Civil society groups have a critical role, as partners, advocates and watchdogs. So do commercial enterprises. Without the private sector, sustainable development will remain only a distant dream. We are not asking corporations to do something different from their normal business; we are asking them to do their normal business differently."*

Bahá'ís of Peru help energize an interfaith coalition, winning key recognition

LIMA, Peru — Recent efforts by the Bahá'í community of Peru to promote religious understanding have helped to energize an on-going interfaith collaboration aimed at winning wider Government recognition for non-Catholic religions, leading to the establishment of a new national Directorate of Interfaith Affairs.

Specifically, Bahá'í cooperation with a Peruvian human rights organization contributed to the inclusion of a wider and more diverse group of religious organizations in the collaboration. In the end, the Government responded by creating the new directorate, which will support greater freedoms for non-Catholic religions in Peru.

"The Bahá'ís helped us a lot," said Dorcas Rosas, a spokesperson for INTERDES, a Peruvian non-governmental organization that organized the coalition of religions. "They helped because they had good relations with a lot of the other religions."

Since May, the activities of Bahá'í communities to promote religious tolerance have focused on the distribution of a letter written by the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Bahá'í Faith, and addressed to "the World's Religious Leaders." The letter calls for decisive action to eradicate religious intolerance and fanaticism. [The full text of the letter can be found at: <http://www.bahai.org/article-1-1-0-1.html>]

Since the letter's release, Bahá'í communities around the world have worked to distribute it to international, national and local religious leaders. Thousands have so far received the letter, and the response has been overwhelmingly appreciative, with many leaders saying they plan to undertake concrete actions in the field of religious tolerance.

In Peru, the Bahá'í community showed how dialogue among the religions can be an important catalyst for action, said Antonio Morales, a member of the external affairs committee of the Bahá'í community of Peru.

Mr. Morales said INTERDES, a non-governmental organization with the full title of

the Ministerio Internacional de Desarrollo (Ministry of International Development), had been seeking wider freedoms for non-Catholic religions for several years. But, he said, it had worked mainly with evangelical Christian groups in that effort.

However, said Mr. Morales, the Bahá'í community of Peru had become friendly with a more diverse group of religious organizations in Peru, in large part because of its activities to promote tolerance, such as distributing the letter of the Universal House of Justice to religious leaders.

In fact, it was because of the efforts of the community to distribute the letter that it came into contact with the chairman of INTERDES, Julio Rosas. After receiving the letter, Mr. Rosas invited the Bahá'ís to a meeting.

"When we went to INTERDES, we were able to suggest that they should work with all of the religions in Peru," said Mr. Morales. "And because of our friendships with the other religions, INTERDES asked us to invite them into the work."

Ms. Rosas, the daughter of Julio Rosas, confirmed that Bahá'í contacts with such diverse groups as the Hare Krishna, the Islamic Association of Peru, and the Mormons helped INTERDES to widen its collaboration. "The Bahá'ís helped us to contact the others," said Ms. Rosas.

Ultimately, some 15 different non-Catholic religious organizations in Peru, including the Bahá'ís, joined in asking the Government to grant greater religious freedom for all. Traditionally, the Government has had a special relationship with the Catholic Church, granting it tax breaks and other exemptions that the other religions don't have.

The end result was the creation of a Peruvian Interfaith Council, which will be the official liaison for non-Catholic organizations with the Ministry of Justice. As well, the Government has agreed to appoint a National Director of Interfaith Affairs, which will become a parallel position to the Directorate of Catholic Affairs within the Ministry of Justice.*

In the end, the Government responded by creating a new Directorate of Interfaith Affairs, which will support greater freedoms for non-Catholic religions in Peru.

New volume of Bahá'í sacred writings is published

HAIFA, Israel, 22 September 2002 — An important early epistle of Bahá'u'lláh that explores the human quest for spiritual enlightenment and the symbols used throughout the history of religious revelation has been recently translated and published in English.

Gems of Divine Mysteries is the latest publication of the Bahá'í World Centre. Some 82 pages in English, the volume was originally titled *Javahiru'l-Asrar*, and was written in Arabic during Bahá'u'lláh's residence in Iraq, where He was exiled from 1853 to 1863. The book is a letter written in reply to a man who asked about the relationship of prophecy to the Bábí Faith, the forerunner to the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh used the query as an opportunity to elaborate on a number of related subjects.

The book relates closely to two other major works of Bahá'u'lláh: *The Seven Valleys (Haft-Vadi)*, an exposition on the progression of the soul, and *The Book of Certitude (Kitab-i-Iqan)*, which gives an exploration of the progression of divine revelation

and the tribulations sustained by the Manifestations of God. Specifically, it addresses the cause of the rejection of the Prophets of the past, the danger of a literal reading of scripture, the meaning of the signs and portents of the Bible concerning the advent of the new Manifestation, and the continuity of divine revelation.

For example, in *Gems* Bahá'u'lláh explains many of the symbolic terms used in past revelations, such as the term "resurrection" and "Day of Judgment."

"...he who had believed in God and in the Manifestation of His beauty was raised from the grave of heedlessness, gathered together in the sacred ground of the heart, quickened to the life of faith and certitude, and admitted to the paradise of the divine presence," wrote Bahá'u'lláh in *Gems*. "What paradise can be loftier than this, what ingathering mightier, and what resurrection greater? Indeed, should a soul be acquainted with these mysteries, he would grasp that which none other hath fathomed."*

Top-rated Indian BBC quiz show uses New Delhi Bahá'í temple as backdrop

NEW DELHI — "Mastermind India," a top-rated quiz program produced by the BBC, held its first show of the 2002-03 season at the Bahá'í House of Worship.

In a broadcast presented on 8 August 2002 and seen by an estimated 200 million viewers in some 35 countries, the New Delhi House of Worship was the featured backdrop for the season premiere "Champion of Champions" show. The episode brought together four quiz champions from the last four seasons and kicked off the fifth year for the top-rated series, which is available in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe.

The program regularly features historic sites throughout India, such as palaces or forts, for its backdrop, but this was among the few times in the five year history of "Mastermind India" that a site with major religious significance was used, said Nazneen Rowhani, the Bahá'í community of India's liaison with the British Broadcasting Cor-

poration (BBC) for the production.

"What made the program memorable was the in-depth introduction to the Bahá'í Faith and the beautiful, sweeping shots of the House of Worship that accompanied it," said Ms. Rowhani. "Great care had been taken by the producers to portray the details accurately and there was even a glimpse of a copy of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* shown." The *Kitab-i-Aqdas* is among the most important volumes of Bahá'u'lláh's writings.

"In addition, the softly illuminated House of Worship was constantly displayed as it formed the backdrop to the contestants, looking almost as if it was painted into the scene," Ms. Rowhani said.

Completed in 1986, the House of Worship has won numerous architectural awards for its distinctive nine-sided "lotus petal" design, and has become one of the most visited sites in India, drawing more than four million visitors each year.*

Review: A Sacred Trust

Review, continued from back page

dominant “techno-scientific” culture that would have modern man believe that only the day-to-day material world matters.

On the contrary, Mr. Sherrard writes, “[a]ll that is in the natural world, then, from its minutest particle to the constellations, the whole and each particular of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, is nothing but a kind of representational theatre of the spiritual world, where each thing exists in its true beauty and reality,” writes Mr. Sherrard.

“The spiritual world is not another world set apart from the natural world,” he adds. “It intermingles and co-exists with, and constitutes the invisible dimension of, the natural world.”

Without this understanding, he writes, true knowledge of reality will always elude us and the environmental crisis will be impossible to solve.

Satish Kumar builds on this theme. He offers a Jain perspective on reverence for life and suggests that part of our current environmental crisis stems from an arrogance that fails to see that “the material and the spiritual” are “parts of a continuum.” If, however, we look at the earth as a “sacred trust” that entails responsibility for all living beings and for future generations, we will be less likely to take the earth for granted.

Vandana Shiva draws on Hindu scriptural references and rituals that uphold the sacred and spiritual nature of food. Her essay advocates the rejection of global industrialized agriculture in favor of organic methods of food production. Industrial agriculture, she writes, with its emphasis on petrochemical fertilizers and pesticides, not only poisons the soil but also the life forms — such as earth worms — upon which sustainable agriculture is dependent.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr’s essay makes perhaps the most bold assertion of the importance of religion and spirituality in resolving the environmental crisis, writing that “without the resuscitation” of the “religious and metaphysical view of nature, everything else we say about the environmental crisis is just cosmetics and politics.”

He argues that the materialistic/scientific/modernist world-view has severed not only the relationship between God and

man, but also between man and nature — and in this way has helped precipitate the environmental crisis.

“...the environmental crisis cannot be solved by good engineering (or better engineering), cannot be solved by economic planning, cannot even be solved by cosmetic changes in our conception of development and change,” he writes. “It requires a very radical transformation in our consciousness, and this means not discovering a completely new state of consciousness, but returning to the state of consciousness which traditional humanity always had. It means to re-discover the traditional way of looking at the world of nature as sacred presence.”

The essay by Suheil Bushrui, holder of the Bahá’i Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland, in many ways ties together some of the common themes of the others, and, in essence, offers a plan of implementation. For it goes on to assert that that ultimate spiritual ideal for humanity today — and something that is equally necessary for the protection of the environment and a balancing of human needs — is the creation of a unified world commonwealth.

“A consciousness of the oneness of creation and of the mutuality of the material and spiritual elements of society, and the counterpart of such consciousness in action — its beneficent expression in our wise use and care of the environment — are dependent on humanity’s unity,” he writes.

And to create and reap the benefits of such unity, writes Dr. Bushrui, “[o]nly a ‘world federal system’ animated by concern for all the people of the world will enable mankind to arrange its economic, material and social life in a manner concomitant with justice for all peoples and the duty of reverence towards the earth...”

Such a system, he writes, tempered by spiritual principles and ethical ideals such as “the sense of belonging to one earth,” would “generate new thinking about the mutuality of the physical and spiritual activities of which the planet is the joyous and holy site...”

A Sacred Trust is, then, a significant contribution to the growing literature that connects religion and ecology. Indeed, the range and depth of exploration found in the volume’s essays offer a persuasive brief on the degree to which any successful approach to sustainable development in today’s world must encompass the realms of spirituality and religious belief.*

“A consciousness of the oneness of creation and of the mutuality of the material and spiritual elements of society, and the counterpart of such consciousness in action — its beneficent expression in our wise use and care of the environment — are dependent on humanity’s unity.”

– Suheil Bushrui

Finding the locus between faith and ecology

**A Sacred Trust:
Ecology &
Spiritual Vision**

*Edited by David
Cadman and
John Carey*

*The Temenos
Academy & The
Prince's
Foundation*

London

Thoughtful people have always understood the connection between nature and spirituality. But in terms of an explicit connection between organized religion and the conservation movement, an important milestone came in 1987, when the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) invited global religions to participate in an interfaith event at Assisi, Italy, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Fund.

The idea of involving the religions in conservation work stemmed from the realization that the great majority of the world's peoples, especially at the grassroots level, can perhaps best be motivated to embrace environmentalism if they see it as connected to their religious belief, which is for many the most important thing in their lives.

Since Assisi, there has been an ever enlarging body of thought on the intersection between faith and ecology. At first, the focus was on showing what the scriptures of each religion had to say about protecting the environment; later, there came more complex explorations of the locus between the two realms.

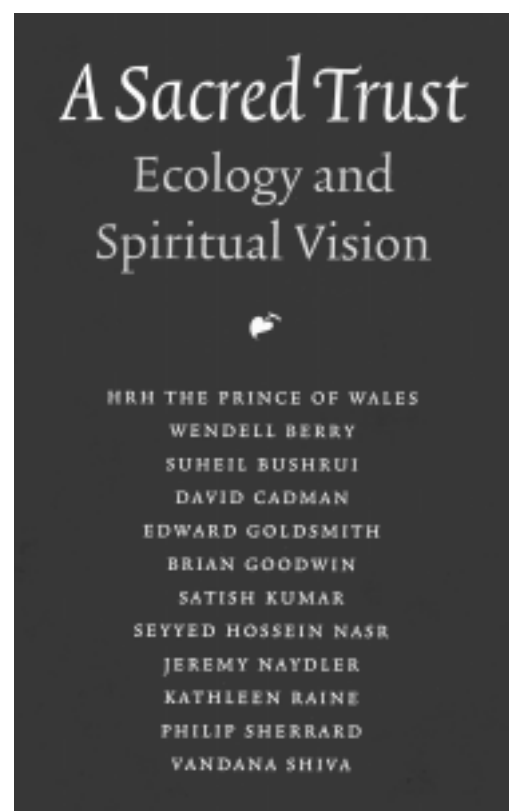
Into this latter realm of increasingly deep exploration falls the new book, *A Sacred Trust: Ecology & Spiritual Vision*, which was recently published by The Prince's Foundation — an organization established by Prince Charles, HRH the Prince of Wales, and the Temenos Academy, of which Prince Charles is patron.

Based on a series of lectures organized by the Foundation and the Academy, and introduced with a preface from Prince Charles himself, *A Sacred Trust* features essays by more than a dozen leading thinkers whose work has touched on the junction between faith and ecology.

Edited by David Cadman and John Carey, the book includes contributions by Wendell Berry, Suheil Bushrui, Edward Goldsmith, Brian Goodwin, Satish Kumar, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Jeremy Nadler, Kathleen Raine, Philip Sherrard, and Vandana Shiva. Among them, they cover religious traditions or backgrounds that include the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism.

Although the contributors are quite diverse in their backgrounds, styles and approaches (Ms. Raine's offering is a poem), a unifying theme nevertheless emerges. As summarized by Mr. Cadman, the common theme is that "we must come to see the world as related, connected, and whole; that all that is part of an intricate web of causation and dependency; and, indeed, that we should see ourselves as 'a part of' and not 'apart from.'"

This theme of interconnectedness goes beyond traditional ecological holism that stresses the interdependence of earthly life;



rather, the essays in *A Sacred Trust* explore the deep connection between the "material world" and the spiritual one — and the implications that necessarily has for ecology.

The opening essay by the late Philip Sherrard, a founder of the review *Temenos* and a member of the Greek Orthodox Church, sets the stage by criticizing the

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