



THE GREEK ORTHODOX PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH AND ALL THE EAST

A Seven Year Plan For Generational Changes For A Living Planet

Introduction

The Alliance of Religions and Conservation cordially invited the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East to develop a Seven Year Plan for Generational Changes for a Living Planet to take forward the commitment of the Church to care more effectively for the Earth's natural environment.

Accordingly, His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV asked the University of Balamand, an Orthodox University founded by His Beatitude in 1988 and represented by its President Dr Elie A Salem to attend to this very important request. A university-wide ad hoc task force was formed to work with the Institute of the Environment at the University to propose a plan for consideration and endorsement by the Church. The task force was co-chaired by the Vice-President for Planning and Educational Relations and the Vice President for Health Affairs and Community Development and included the Director of the Institute of the Environment as well as representatives from the Institute of Theology, and the Faculties of Sciences, Health Sciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Engineering and Business and Management.

Today, the Antioch See includes the Republics of Lebanon and Syria as well as Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula, parts of Turkey and the Antioch Orthodox communities of North and Latin America, Australia and Europe. It includes approximately 1,200,000 followers in the Middle East in addition to 2,000,000 living abroad. The Antioch See has 28 active monasteries limited to Lebanon and Syria, seven of which are well known as historic Patriarchal Monasteries and Convents.

Main recommendations:

1. Environmental education and ethics

- Environmental committees will be established at all levels. The committees will be in charge of developing environmental action plans and overseeing their implementation.
- Seminars and workshops will be held for the clergy to raise awareness about current environmental issues.
- A set of sermons on the environment will be shared with priests to support their educational and preaching efforts. Likewise a set of lessons for Sunday school teachers will be prepared.
- An action plan for greening the curricula of schools governed by, or affiliated to, the Church as well as at the University of Balamand will be developed and implemented.
- A new website will be developed to share information on the environment in Lebanon. Lebanese Orthodox in the diaspora and the Lebanese community living outside Lebanon will be targeted in the environmental awareness campaigns.
- Research into the Holy Scriptures will be carried out on changing climate and the continuation of life on earth, the use of energy and its conservation, the generation and management of waste in societies, the proper management of waste and the sustainable management of lands and forests.

2. Sustainable Agriculture and Forests

- Sustainable agricultural techniques will be introduced where farming is taking place on Church land.
- A Geographic Information System database of land cover and use will be created.
- Plans will be developed to introduce proper management of forested lands and sustainable agriculture with pilot activities on selected Church lands.
- Training will be held for clergy and local communities on proper management of forested lands and sustainable agriculture.

3. Water Efficiency and Conservation

- Seminars and workshops will be held for the clergy and local communities on water pollution, on the best methods to efficiently use water resources as well as on the best methods to irrigate agricultural lands used by the Church.
- Water-saving devices will be installed in all Church-affiliated institutions and organizations, and the installation of such devices in all Orthodox homes will be promoted.

4. Waste Management

- Solid waste sorting containers will be installed in all Church-run establishments.
- Seminars will be held for clergy and local communities on sorting, composting, reducing, reusing and recycling solid waste.

5. Energy Efficiency

- Energy use in all Church establishments will be assessed.
- A programme for energy conservation and efficiency will be developed in all Church establishments, including the installation of energy saving appliances and the installation of renewable energy devices for energy generation.
- Workshops and seminars on energy efficiency will be held for the clergy and local communities.

6. Climate Change

- Seminars and workshops for clergy and local communities will be held on the impact of climate change.
- A list of personal activities to contribute to reducing climate change will be drawn up and distributed.

7. Advocacy

- A grass roots movement by the Church and its affiliated structures will be initiated to lobby for changes on environmental issues and policies in the Church.
- Coalitions and partnerships will be built with non government organisations and community-based organisations to co-ordinate and implement the Seven Year Plan.
- Public events will be held to advocate environmental responsibility and sustainable development.

Integral to the proposed plan is the readiness of the University of Balamand to provide technical assistance to concerned and interested stakeholders through every stage of the Seven Year Plan. This will be done through the various faculties and organisational elements of the University, with particular reliance on the Institute of the Environment.

The proposed 7 year plan will be further developed for consideration by the Church and its organisational elements.