

Valuing water- Interfaith statement on Water and Faith from the SIWI Swedish Water House Cluster group

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Water is fundamental for all life on earth. Today our common water resources are threatened by unsustainable use, pollution, and climate change. To meet these challenges, a spiritual understanding of our relationship to and the value of water is crucial.

Religion – Faith

All humans need to orient themselves in life. For many of us, this orientation stems from how we answer the questions: Where do we come from? What are we doing here? Where are we going? Sometimes the answers to these questions are organized into what we call religions. Together, these questions create a narrative that helps us understand and orient ourselves as humans and fosters the ethics upon which we construct our societies.

The living part of a belief system could be characterized as faith. Faith is our everyday practice and understanding of what it is to be human and how we relate to the universe, including our home, the Earth.

Water and Faith

An indispensable part of life is water. It is essential when it comes to all human development; to meeting the challenges of climate change; and to realizing not only Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 about clean water and sanitation for all but all the SDGs. In the narratives of many faiths, water is often central; and in the practicing of faith, water is often used as a tool for symbolic spiritual cleansing and the caring of the whole of existence.

In a time when science tells us water resources are threatened by human activities, we as faith communities must respond to these threats. Stories from our different traditions and the ethical understanding of water as a common good play a central role in protecting and influencing the way we value and use water. In our opinion, the origin of these threats can be traced to the lack of a deeper awareness of the interconnectedness of all life and the lack of reflection on the consequences of our actions.

Our faith traditions call for joint actions to foster awareness and work for a change of attitude to achieve a sustainable and just management of our water sources and the entire ecological system.

- We invite people of all faiths to go back to the wells of their traditions to find inspiration for a more sustainable way of life;
- We call for faith leaders in all faith communities to actively take part in a dialogue on sustainable lifestyles and structural change to achieve the SDGs;
- We call for a gentler lifestyle that reduces our ecological footprints, inspired by our faith traditions;
- We demand brave decisions from decision makers to act for a transformation to a more sustainable future by securing safe water access for all; and
- We call upon decision makers and authorities to embrace faith-based actors as a resource and partner in all work for justice and sustainability.

This statement is endorsed by all participating actors and institutions in the SIWI Swedish Water House Cluster group on Water and Faith, representing different faith-based traditions in Sweden that have come together to explore ways in which faith traditions and organizations working with water can find common ways to foster a deeper understanding of the importance of sustainable water use.