

# Interfaith Appeal for Action on Tropical Forests and Global Warming

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As people of faith, we are called to protect the integrity of our environment so that its diverse species, including humans, may thrive. We understand the importance of environmental protection and conservation as an issue of responsibility, righteousness, and justice for all beings.

Jews and Christians are taught in the Bible that the “Human being was placed in the Garden of Eden to till it and to tend it,” (Genesis 2:15), and that “in your war against a city...you must not destroy its trees, wielding the ax against them. You may eat of them, but you must not cut them down” (Deuteronomy 20:19-20). Further, the Judeo-Christian tradition commands people to leave the corners of their fields and the gleanings of their harvest to the poor (Leviticus 19:9-10).

The Qur'an declares that God created the earth in balance, and that human beings are the trustees (vicegerents) of creation (Holy Qur'an 2:29-30).

Buddhist teachings proclaim “As a mother watches over her child, willing to risk her own life to protect her only child, so with a boundless heart should one cherish all living beings, radiating kindness over the entire world” (Metta Sutta).

We, as people of faith, must live in harmony with the earth and guarantee just distribution of resources to all its inhabitants. To honor this obligation, we must lead in the effort against global climate change, including policies to halt deforestation.

We believe:

- Global climate change is a moral crisis that puts all beings at risk, and we have a moral obligation to protect all species, including people, around the world. Global warming pollution must be reduced in a variety of ways to prevent the most environmentally disastrous and economically costly effects of climate change.
- One major source of global warming pollution is tropical deforestation in developing countries. Loss of tropical forests is occurring at the rate of one acre per second. This deforestation is responsible for about 20% of global warming pollution worldwide – more than the pollution from every car, truck, plane, ship and train on earth.
- Forests are integral to our planet's health. Protecting tropical forests also protects the 50% of the world's plant and animal species that call the forests home.
- Tropical forests grow mostly in developing countries, and people in these countries depend on the forests for their livelihood. Forest ecosystems are critical to providing food products, raw materials for construction, medicines, and energy, water, and biodiversity conservation in both urban and rural areas in the developing world. Protecting tropical forests will protect the local communities and aid in the effort to end poverty in developing nations.

Therefore, we, the undersigned leaders of diverse faith traditions, stand together to urge the U.S. to lead the world in confronting climate change. Our nation must pass strong domestic climate legislation that includes funding for the protection for tropical forests. The U.S. must also be a leader in international climate treaty negotiations to ensure a strong treaty that includes provisions for tropical forest protection.