

Muslim leaders issue call to act on climate change

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Muslim leaders and scholars from 20 countries made a joint declaration at a conference in Istanbul, calling on Muslims and all nations worldwide to address climate change.

“Our species, though selected to be a caretaker or steward (*khalifah*) on the earth, has been the cause of such corruption and devastation on it,” the August 18 statement says.

Supporters of the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change included the grand muftis (the highest authorities in religious law) of Uganda and Lebanon and government representatives from Turkey and Morocco. The conference itself, the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium, was cosponsored by Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, and GreenFaith.

The declaration came in the wake of President Obama’s announcement of a Clean Power Plan in early August, which requires states to reduce carbon emissions from coal power plants starting in 2017.

The declaration is also a precursor to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Paris this December. Among other things, it puts pressure on those attending the UN conference to set clear goals, calls on wealthy and oil-producing nations to be leaders in curbing greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and asks that all nations commit to 100 percent renewable energy or a zero emissions strategy.

The statement also quotes Islamic texts, suggesting a religious imperative to care for the environment and calling on the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims to play an active role in these efforts.

“We call on all groups to join us in collaboration, cooperation and friendly competition in this endeavor and we welcome the significant contributions taken by other faiths, as we can all be winners in this race,” the statement said. “If we each

offer the best of our respective traditions, we may yet see a way through our difficulties.”

Critics pointed out that some of the biggest Islamic nations have not taken an active part in supporting the call. Fazlun Khalid, who was involved in drafting the declaration, noted that Islam has a different structure from other faith traditions, with “no Islamic pope.”

“People need to be told and politicians need to stop misleading their people, in telling them they can go on increasing their standards of living for ever and ever and ever,” Khalid told the BBC. —Religion News Service; *The Christian Science Monitor*

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