

# Sustainability through the lens of Islam

By [Dr Thameem Ushama](#) - February 25, 2022 @ 12:40pm

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(FILES) Smouldering peatland is pictured in Kampar, Riau province, on September 17, 2019. Many nations remain silent on exploiting the environment and natural resources for economic development and urbanisation, and often justify it. Deforestation and forest degradation occur to develop infrastructure and obtain maximum state revenues. - (Photo by ADEK BERRY / AFP)

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SUSTAINABILITY is one of the most critical problems nowadays. Discourses are held on it regularly. However, there are myths and misunderstandings.

Some assume it is someone else's agenda and that it has nothing to do with growth from a religious perspective. On the other hand, a few others perceive it as the secularisation of Islamic concepts, cognitive processes and beliefs.



...emics with religious impulses,

...confirms that the concept of  
...instead, Muslim scholars have





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The first verse of the opening chapter of the Quran states, "Praise be to Allah the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds." Yusuf Ali states that "the Arabic term Rabb usually translated as Lord also has the meaning of cherishing, sustaining and bringing to maturity. Allah cares all the Worlds He has created" (Yusuf Ali, The Holy Quran, 14).

The term "sustainability" is derived from "sustain". From the verse, it is understood that Islam promotes sustainability.

The Quranic paradigm to sustainability is based on the prohibition of aggression, misuse, misappropriation, abuse, overuse, exploitation, corruption, ruin, and destruction.



...biting the environment and natural  
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...opment in Islam is "the balanced and  
simultaneous realisation of consumer welfare, economic efficiency,  
attainment of social justice and ecological balance in the framework of an  
evolutionary knowledge-based, socially interactive model defining the  
Shuratic process".

The Shuratic process is Islam's consultation or participatory ruling principle (Iyad Abumoghi, Ecolslam, Environment, Sustainable Development).

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In Maqasid al-Shariah (Objectives of the Islamic Revealed Law), preserving and protecting the environment is a crucial and preserved element and is classified under property preservation (hifz al-mal).

Hence, humans are not permitted to kill animals or destroy plants for the sake of amusement, as explicit in Maqasid al-Shariah, seeing as they are God's worshippers, and killing or destroying them is a transgression of God's authority.

Social sustainability is referenced in the Quran. The primary source of power for development is a human being. The human brain and capacity to think, organise their lives effectively, take care of others, and take care of themselves are given to them.

As a result, the only human being capable of ruling this realm is the Khalifah, a Quranic terminology. Males and females are created to ensure the preservation of humankind or progeny (hifz al-nasl) on this planet, as stipulated in the Quran, al-Nisa:1.

Islam requires social and economic development. The Quran speaks about economic sustainability. From an Islamic sustainability point of view, economic development exploits natural resources to an appropriate level for human well-being (Sejahtera).

Economic sustainability also considers the evaluation of economic success that consistently satisfies people's non-material and spiritual needs.

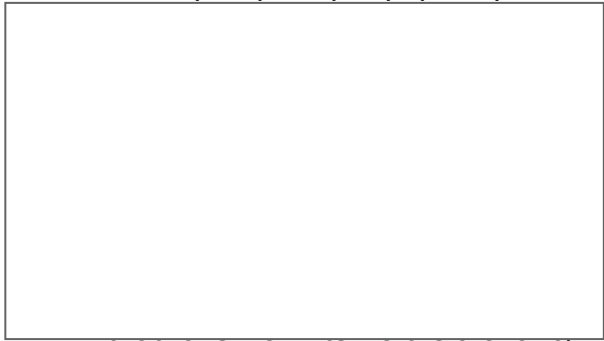
Zakat (alms, welfare-due, poor-due) and Waqf (endowment) rules offer effective socio-economic growth and development instruments in Islam. Indeed, like any trading or commercial transaction in Islam, these Islamic economic concepts are built on sharing and caring in the distribution of wealth.

Humankind must take on the trustee (Khalifah) responsibly managing the earth under Islamic law guidance.

The Quran also addresses environmental sustainability. Prophet Muhammad's examples also stress the significance of environmental concerns and man's responsibility to the environment.

To begin with, the Prophet's stand on land reclamation that whoever brings dead land to life has a recompense in it for him, and whatever any creature seeking sustenance eats of it shall be reckoned as charity from him.

On another occasion, the Prophet went further that if anyone plants a tree, neither human nor any of God's creatures will eat from it without it being



is based on Prophet Muhammad's  
over plants a tree and is patient in  
until it bears fruit, for him in everything  
with God" (Musnad Ahmad), and there  
is a reward for him.

Another tradition is: "Never does a Muslim plant trees or cultivate land and birds or a man or a beast eat out of them, but that is a charity on his behalf" (Sahih Muslim, Book 22, Chapter 2, Hadith 12).



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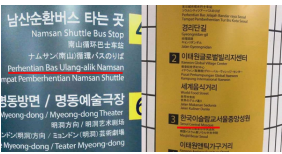


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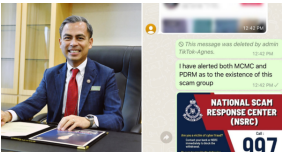
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These traditions demonstrate the emphasis Prophet Muhammad placed on land reclamation and the equal rights of all God's creatures to benefit from it in the early days of Islam.

Hence, the same model is applied by his followers. Contemporary Muslims must consider and investigate methods for enforcing the same messages, known as the sustainability of the ecosystem.

Another critical point is protecting wildlife and natural resources by identifying protected areas (hima). It signifies ecological preservation and equilibrium.

The Prophet established hima as public property or common lands managed by the public authority to conserve natural resources (Al-Bayhaqi, al-Dala'il, 5/372-373). Extensive grazing was not allowed in such places.

Shariah instructs that upstream farms should be attentive to downstream users to avoiding monopolisation. It is unethical for a farm adjacent to a stream to monopolise its water.

A farmer is required to distribute the remaining water to people downstream after withholding a reasonable quantity for his crops. In addition, if the water supply is insufficient for all the farms along the stream, the older farms' demands must be met before the newer farms can irrigate.

This indicates the long-term use of water based on its safe yield. This guidance reflects Islam's concern for the environment's long-term sustainability.

The rights to benefit from nature are intertwined with accountability and resource management or conservation. Prophet Muhammad introduced this essential legal principle.

People's ignorance of what their God — the Creator expects of them is to blame for many environmental degradations.

People should be educated that environmental protection is a religious obligation: " ... but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief" (Quran, al-Qasas: 77. (

The Fasad fi'l Ard described in al-Qasas: 77 also refers to all forms of damages and destructions in the land, including degradation and deterioration of the environment and ecosystem.

As the Quran declares, Islam advocates the efficient and effective use of natural resources and the reduction of waste, "... Eat and drink, but waste not the wasters" (Quran, al-A'raf: 31). "And are extravagant, 'who make mischief (s)'" (Quran, al-Shu'ara': 151-152). "Do th been set in order... " (Quran, al-A'raf:

... is to cleanse the body and garments of all filth and pollutants and purify them so that humankind might always appear presentable.

Only a clean location can be used for prayer. Muslims can pray only after purifying with pure water. Urinating in stagnant water which is not flowing and dumping waste into the water supply is prohibited.

The traditions of Prophet Muhammad emphasise conserving water and not wasting it. The Prophet said: "Do not waste water even if you are on a running river" (Sunan Ibn Maja, Hadith 425).

A tradition says: "A Bedouin came to the Prophet to ask him about Wudu', so he showed him how to perform Wudu', washing each part three times, then he said: 'This is Wudu'. Whoever does more than that has done badly, done to extremes, and done wrong" (Sunan al-Nasa'i, Vol.1, Book, 1, Chapter 105, Hadith 140).

These facts illustrate that Islam prioritises conserving water resources from pollution. Water wastage is forbidden.

The environment and natural resources must be protected, conserved, and developed as a religious obligation to which every Muslim must adhere.

The Quran provides a holistic vision of the universe. It promotes people to live a balanced, moderate, and environment-friendly lifestyle that does not affect or destroy the environment.

This commitment stems from the individual's need to protect himself, his community and humanity at large: "... but do thou good, as Allah has been good to thee, and seek not (occasions for) mischief in the land: for Allah loves not those who do mischief" (Qur'an, al-Qasas:77).

The Prophet promoted tree planting as a positive and beneficial practice, suggesting that if one has a shoot of a plant in his hand and it is possible to plant it before Doomsday comes, he should plant it (Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Book 27, Hadith 479).

Even during wartime, Muslim leaders like Abu Bakr warned his troops not to cut down trees, harm farms, or kill animals except for food.

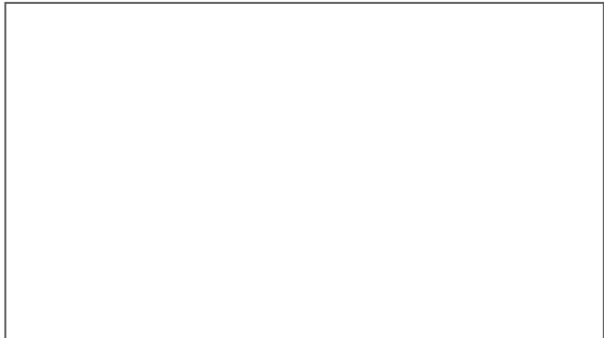
Consequently, we can deduce that the Islamic sustainability perspective is rooted in heavenly sources. Social, economic, and environmental domains are the three central pillars of sustainability.

By integrating fundamental concepts and values such as Khalifah, Amanah, Iqra', and Rahmatan li'l Alamin (KhAIR) into its curriculum, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) is leading the world in human development sustainability.

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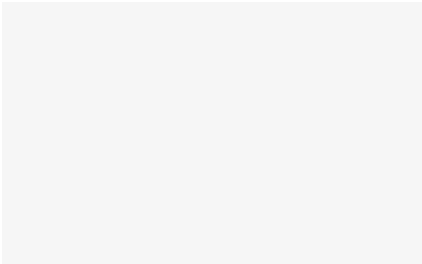
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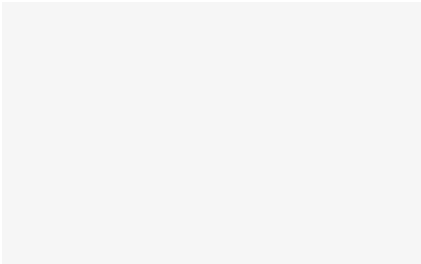
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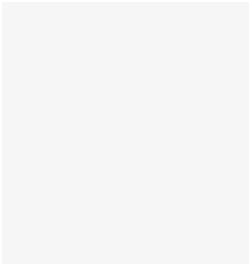
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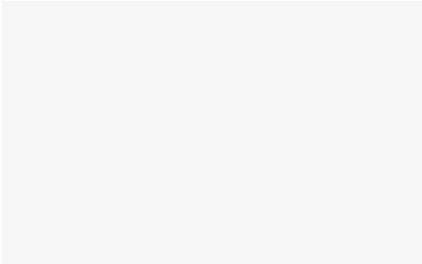
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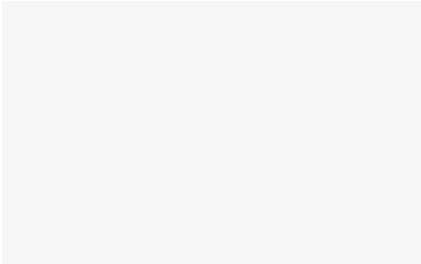
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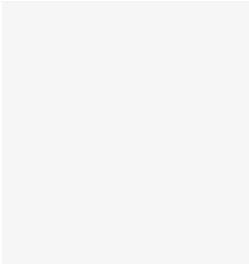
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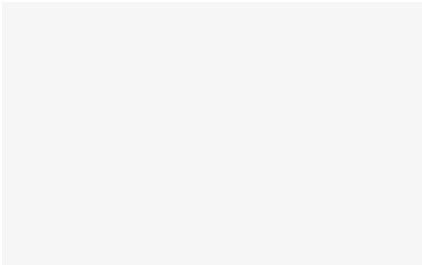
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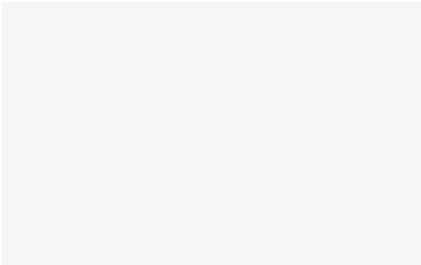
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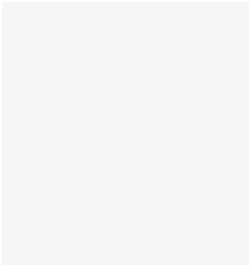
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