

# *Spirituality and Sustainability*

EXPERIENCES OF  
THE INTERNATIONAL  
ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

Edited by

Abdul Rashid Moten

With a foreword by Professor Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak,  
Rector, the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)



IIUM



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## CHAPTER 2

# **The Convergence between *Maqāṣid* *al-Sharī'ah* and Sustainable Development Goals**

Abdul Rashid Moten

The United Nations recognised that the Millennium Development Goals that expired in 2015 have failed certain people and countries and hence resolved to “reach the furthest behind first” with a pledge that “no one will be left behind.” The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. This Agenda is “a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity” seeking to strengthen universal peace and eradicate poverty in all its forms and dimensions (United Nations, 2015). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), identified by 2030 Agenda, require economic growth and development but integrates it with sustainability. It is based on a modernist, technical-rational view of the world. It is ambitious and universal. To Richard Horton (2014), the SDGs are “fairy tales, dressed in the bureaucratese of intergovernmental narcissism, adorned with the robes of multilateral paralysis, and poisoned by the acid of nation-state failure.” Nevertheless, it is to the credit of the UN that it did get universal agreement on a defined set of goals and targets for global sustainability and human development.

The 2030 Agenda consists of 17 interdependent goals (SDGs) with 169 sub-targets or targets attached to the objectives. The themes are further elaborated in the 5 Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Thus, the member countries of the UN agreed to humanise the natural world.

However, the achievement of these universal goals, resulting from “the largest consultation in its history,” will require involvement from multilateral bodies and people from all walks of life. Many countries with sizable Muslim populations have high levels of poverty and score low in terms of progress towards achieving the SDGs. Muslim countries can face some limitations in mobilising resources due to cultural and religious factors. They are comfortable with *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* which did not gain much currency in the Muslim world up until the late 20th century (Masud, 1995; Weiss, 2010). It was in the early 1990s that the courses on *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* were introduced in many universities and colleges in the Muslim world. Scholars engaged in specialising



on the subject did convincingly argue that the overall goals of *sharī'ah* entail realising human well-being by enhancing welfare or benefit (*maṣlahah*) and preventing harm (*mafsadah*). The ultimate objective of *sharī'ah* is to promote and protect the well-being of people and nature, which lies in the safeguarding of the five fundamental objectives of the *sharī'ah*: *ḥifz al-dīn* (religion), *ḥifz al-nasb* (life), *ḥifz al-nasl* (lineage), *ḥifz al-'aql* (intellect), and *ḥifz al-māl* (property/wealth). The satisfaction of these needs is a basic human right and has been addressed under the generic term *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. These objectives have a great resemblance to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is the higher objectives of the rules of the *sharī'ah*. If observed, these rules will facilitate the normal functioning of society, enhance the public good (*maṣlahah*), and will help achieve goals that embody social and economic justice. It is better seen as a requirement for the survival and spiritual well-being of individuals. The knowledge of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is, therefore, important to understand the *sharī'ah*, and to derive solutions to contemporary problems faced by humanity at large. Andrew F. March (2011, 358) describes *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* as the:

...panacea for modern reformers and pragmatists who want to establish Islamic legitimacy for new substantive moral, legal and political commitments in new socio-political conditions, because it allows Muslims to ask not whether a given norm has been expressly endorsed within the text, but whether it is compatible with the deeper goods and interests which God wants to protect through the Law.

Based on a content analysis of relevant materials, this chapter analyses the convergence between *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* and Sustainable Development Goals. It argues as well for adding an additional sustainable goal calling for an enhanced spirituality.

### **Five (5) *Ḍarūriyyāt* and the 5Ps**

The United Nations' 2030 Agenda encompassing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development is in line with the principles and objectives of development from the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* perspective. Eradicating poverty and hunger; promoting health and education; reducing inequality and gender disparities; building sustainable infrastructure and making cities more sustainable; combating climate change; protecting oceans,

forests and bio-diversity are the goals equally advocated by Islam. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* advocates peace and justice and promotes economic growth that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

It is important to note that like *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, the tier of the sustainable development talks about five elements but uses different terminologies (Figure 2.1). These 5 Ps represent the core priorities of SDGs:

- People (the social dimension). Specifically, the SDGs aim is to end extreme poverty, including hunger, and to ensure universal access to essential social services and basic infrastructure by 2030.
- Planet (the environmental dimension). The SDGs commit to protecting the planet from degradation, including through sustainable production and consumption and the sustainable management of natural resources, and to tackle climate change.
- Prosperity (the economic dimension). The aim is to ensure that all human beings enjoy fulfilling lives and that economic, social and technological development are in tandem with nature.
- Partnership (collective and collaborative approach to transform the world). The SDGs are committed to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies free from fear and violence.
- Peace (the ethical dimension). This theme is concerned with ideals and values such as equality, freedom, human dignity and justice). Peace is essential for sustainable development and vice-versa.

Five Ps incorporate the 17 sustainable development goals. The category “people” combines Goals 1,2,3,4, and 5 that aims at ending poverty and hunger and ensuring that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. The category “planet” (water and sanitation, sustainable consumption, fighting climate change, marine and terrestrial ecosystems) represents goals 6, 12, 13, 14 and 15. The aim is to protect the planet from degradation through sustainable consumption and production, sustainably managing its natural resources and taking urgent action on climate change. Issues relating to “prosperity” are dealt with in goals 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. These goals remind that economic development that can attain prosperity (i.e., prosperous and fulfilling lives and making economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature) is the requisite condition for the world to live with peace and prosperity. The world community must be careful about energy utilization and about issues involving



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# *Spirituality and Sustainability*

## EXPERIENCES OF

### THE INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

The International Islamic University Malaysia has, since 2018, redoubled its struggle to restore its wisdom, strengths, and dignity and promote comprehensive excellence. Hence, the University adopted the United Nations' sustainable development agenda as a complement to the University's vision and mission of Islamisation, Integration, Internationalisation and Comprehensive Excellence.

The book explains the ways in which the SDGs will provide a new strategy to apply the concept of Islamisation, which has long been the foundation of the IIUM. Consequently, the university's operations and facilities have been adjusted so that they become mediums in applying and showcasing a lifestyle that is sustainable. Everything in the university i.e. the curricular and extra-curricular courses, the research activities, and everyday operations in administrative offices and other places are geared towards sustainable development in line with the maqāṣid al-sharī'ah. Elements of sustainability are integrated in every aspect of the university's administration and, indeed, in teaching, research and community engagement. Consequently, the IIUM has adopted "Humanising Higher Education through maqāṣid al-sharī'ah and SDGs" as its official strategic mission.

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