

EcoSikh Press Release

(Washington, DC; June 3, 2009): The Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) has partnered with the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to help make our world greener. The three are proud to announce the launch of a new initiative called EcoSikh.

EcoSikh is the Sikh community's contribution to the UNARC Seven Year Plan project, whose aim is to help the world's major religions create long term plans to improve their relationship with the environment. The plans, in which each tradition celebrates its unique relationship with the environment and puts its teachings on ecology into action, will be launched at a major Event at Windsor Castle this November, and will also be used to inform the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen this December.

"EcoSikh provides an unprecedented opportunity for the Sikh community. Throughout our history, Sikhs have been pioneers in environmental work and continue to be so today. EcoSikh will help the community to connect all that is already being done and will enable us to forge new paths toward the creation of a sustainable and eco-friendly planet," said Dr. Rajwant Singh, Chairperson of SCORE.

ARC and SCORE are hosting a consultation in New Delhi in July to give Sikh community leaders – both in India and in the diaspora – the opportunity to discuss and agree the EcoSikh plan - and establish the infrastructure needed for its implementation.

"In 1999 the Sikh communities worldwide agreed that the next 300 year cycle would be the Cycle of Creation. I have been impressed how, in recent years, this decision has begun to shape and influence the way Sikh communities worldwide perceive the future. The Sikh Five Year Plan is the next historic step in the Sikh communities' commitment to walk faithfully alongside the rest of Creation into a future which they believe they can make both better and greener," said Martin Palmer, Secretary General of ARC

The plan focuses on five key areas - assets, education, media/advocacy, eco-twinning, and celebration. So, for example, the Sikh gurdwaras in India feed some 30 million of people every day, free of charge. Their energy and food sourcing are therefore highly important as a means of living their commitment for creation and walking lightly on the earth. From this also arises the commitment to define what an eco-gurdwara could and should be.

The whole undertaking is an articulation of a Sikh eco-theology that finds its roots in Guru Nanak Dev Ji and continues through the work of modern day Sikh eco-patrons like Bhagat Puran Singh Ji.

"Everything that concerns all living creatures is of interest to me," said Bhagat Puran Singh Ji as he launched his campaign of environmental awareness more than fifty years ago. EcoSikh continues this tradition by connecting Sikh eco-initiatives around the globe

and sharing the relevant devotional songs of Sri Guru Granth Sahib as well as thoughts of contemporary Sikh eco-leaders grappling with today's environmental crises.

Emerging from this theology is a clear plan of action that will be implemented over the next five years, in order to put elements into place that will help Sikh communities protect the natural environment for generations to come.

Those interested in learning more or in becoming a part of this innovative project may CONTACT: Chris Byrnes; cbyrnes@post.harvard.edu