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Faiths and faith-based finance are key to delivering a more sustainable, resilient world

Prof Peter Head CBE, Founder and Chair

The Global Goals, Cities and Human Settlements

The 2015/2016 agreements establishing the Global Goals, Sendai Framework and Paris Agreement commitments to tackle climate change, mark a historic moment and opportunity for transformational change. One thing I learned in Washington two days ago, I was involved in a very important piece of research called 'Research into Planetary Health' which was hosted by the Economist and Lancet magazines and the Rockefeller Foundation. We have produced a report on what are the risks and opportunities in planetary health – that is the health of people and the planet working in harmony. That report is a scary one because it shows that we are on the brink of a very nasty outcome if we don't look after the planet's ecology. But I heard in Washington two days ago that the G7 countries have decided to adopt planetary health as a core policy for the whole world and that UNDP, UNEP and UNICEF are coming together to reinforce it which creates great harmony with everything that's being said today.

President Macron at the UN General Assembly said that cities are the place that will demonstrate how to make big change happen, particularly climate change, so we have been focusing a lot, when I created my charity the Ecological Sequestration Trust six years ago, to help the world to deliver these outcomes, focusing on city regions.

There is wide recognition of the critical role the population of cities and regions can play in the future of human development, living in a way that enables ecological restoration to take place as part of the shift to a more resilient world.

Cities are human creations, places in which the Global Goals set an aspiration to enable people to lead peaceful, healthy, prosperous and fulfilling lives with full respect of human rights for all. Human settlements are the embodiment of the human spirit, where we determine our rights and responsibilities, both as individuals and collectively.

Cultural Heritage and Faiths

We have roots in the places in which we grew up, where our families rose to prayer and worship over generations, sustained by beliefs and practices that related to community care and respect for the environment. Churches, monasteries, shrines, sanctuaries, mosques, synagogues, temples and sacred landscapes are all woven into this sense of place and belonging.

I worked on the writing of urban Goal 11,(1) and I personally fought to include one sentence - “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage” - as a key target in Goal 11, because I know from my planning work around the world that respecting and celebrating the culture of places is the key to moving forward with communities to develop places fit for the 21st century. People facing change are much more positive when cultural and natural heritage is retained, looked after and respected.(2)

Part of that history lies in the fact that you, as the faith institutions, are the oldest social service providers we know. You were the original providers of health, education, nutrition, farming, sanitation and energy. You were also the oldest fundraisers, community mobilisers and human and social capital builders. Your ability to convene people voluntarily, to resource critical endeavors, particularly at times of risk, continues and the fact that vulnerable communities around the world are at increasing risk brings us together in Zug to find solutions.

Faith-based action

All citizens need to be actively involved in the decisions that affect their future and the New Urban Agenda agreed at Habitat III makes it clear that “effective, accountable institutions will be needed for responsive, inclusive and representative decision making”. Experience so far shows that the word “trust” is completely critical and this is another element that you bring – it’s trust in moving forward.

In the Faiths, you have unparalleled convening capacity and infrastructure to help make the Global Goals a reality for people “in and of themselves”. Billions of people rise to prayer and worship every day, sustained by beliefs and practices that relate to the Global Goals. You have an enduring and extensive network of congregations, affiliates, organizations and individuals. These horizontally and vertically organized networks across scales constitute highly effective channels of communication as well as human and financial resources. You have the capacity to mobilise the financial, institutional and human resources across a broad range of urban issues that need to be tackled, such as jobs, housing, mobility services and infrastructure.

Demonstration of resilient development in Sacred Cities

With rising numbers of pilgrims visiting sacred cities and sites every year, these locations could be the first powerful demonstrations of transformational practice to deliver sustainable water supply, waste management, low carbon energy, sanitation, eco-

mobility and simple low energy accommodation for everyone.

Using a systems approach and resilience, **the total cost of these projects can be reduced by up to 40%** to give a good return on investment and increased beneficial social impact. Pilgrims could take these examples and practices back to their own cities and mobilize resources for change there, providing a powerful scaling mechanism. A group of sacred cities have come forward, because of initiatives by ARC and R20, to be such demonstrators.

Education and learning

It is very important to bring young people into leadership positions for change and your faith institutions recognize the role of learning and capacity building through communities, working at all levels from the national to the neighborhood.

In our Resilience Brokers capacity we can help you build a global system of learning, systematically collected from investment experience in communities. This data will be then aggregated at the national and global level to identify significant trends and emerging patterns. Insights can then be disseminated back to the grassroots through the same channels, informing future planning and investment.

Roadmap 2030

So that brings me to Roadmap 2030 (3). Lots of people said to us, 'okay, you've been looking at this for a while, why don't you create a roadmap for cities and regions to show how this could be done?'

And we did that by convening at Rockefeller Centre in March 2016 with world leaders including OECD, UN, many other agencies, city leaders and the finance community, and we produced this report called *Roadmap 2030 – Financing and implementing the Global Goals in Human Settlements and City Regions*.

This is an action plan that can be used by every place in the planet. It's available online in any language and you can pick it up and use it.

We decided to include the faiths as one of the key actors in this, and the *Bristol Commitments* (4) are completely laced throughout 16 cross cutting themes of action that can be taken forward in any city in the world. And, therefore, you are in a position to work with everyone else as an equal partner to mobilise these outcomes, and planetary health is also laced into this document.

It was decided for all the reasons explained above that the Faiths should be included as a key actor in every city region in the action plan and the multi-faith Bristol Commitments (4), created through the convening of ARC, were included throughout the document.

Roadmap 2030 provides a very practical action plan that any region of the world can use to achieve the Global Goals. It shows how all municipal and city governments, citizens, civil society, academia, faiths and private sector can work in partnership, with the support

of nation states, to mobilize, redirect and unlock the transformative power of trillions of dollars of private funding resources and expertise to deliver the Global Goals.

References

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Peter Head, Resilience Brokers and the Ecological Sequestration Trust

Peter Head, CBE, is a civil and structural engineer who has become a world leader in sustainable development. In 2008 he was named by *The Guardian* as one of 50 people that could 'save the planet'. The same year he was cited by *Time* magazine as one of 30 global eco-heroes. In 2011 he was awarded the CBE in the New Year's Honours List. In 2011 he left Arup to set up The Ecological Sequestration Trust, a charity bringing together scientists, engineers, economists, financiers, and other specialists to create, demonstrate and scale a Collaborative Human-Ecological-Economics-Resource systems GIS platform. The purpose is to enable regions around the world to implement inclusive resilient growth using low carbon urban-rural development approaches. The first prototype was tested in Ghana in 2016 and the plan is to roll it out to 200 city regions by 2022. He was a member of SDSN Thematic Group 9 that wrote and lobbied successfully for an urban SDG and was also one of the authors of the Royal Society Report on Resilience to Extreme Weather 2015. He edited the Roadmap 2030 action plan for financing SDG delivery in cities, including the key role of the faiths. (UK)

