



ECO SANGHA RESOURCES

compiled by George Draffan for
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VOWS, RESOLUTIONS, and STATEMENTS

[\(also see the website of the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology\)](#)

EcoSangha Resolution

WHEREAS, one of the major social issues of our time is a deep concern for the environment; and

WHEREAS, with the core teachings of interdependence and compassion our Buddhist religion is inherently ecological in vision and conservation-oriented in practice; and

WHEREAS, our Buddhist Churches of America not only consume large amounts of resources in themselves but also serve as a model for personal behavior in the homes of each of its members and society at large;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that each BCA temple be encouraged to adopt policies that promote an awareness of the profound implications of our behavior on future generations and to promote ecologically friendly behavior in the spirit of “mottai-nai.” **

Approved by the BCA Ministers’ Association 6/30/2014 and the BCA National Council 3/1/2015.

** To explain the meaning of the phrase “mottai-nai, the following excerpts from “Thank You: Namo Amida Butsu” by the late Rev. Chijun Yakumo are offered:

“Mottai-nai is written with the characters for ‘thing’ and ‘essence’ and a negating suffix. The literal and original meaning of mottai-nai is, therefore, ‘The essence or quality of the thing does not exist...mottai-nai refers to the astonishment we feel when we become aware of ourselves who are killing the essential quality of things. That is what gives rise to the thought, ‘What an unworthy person I am!...this awareness is subjective and can be considered only in relation to ourselves...we are allowed to live solely because of the sacrifices of other living things...For me, there is no way to truly appreciate the lives I consumed other than to devote myself to becoming a Buddha; otherwise, my living this life sustained by their sacrificed lives would truly be mottai-nai.”

When visiting Japan, the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai learned the expression mottai-nai during talks with Yoshinori Kando, head of the Mainichi Shimbun editorial department. She used the expression in her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech.

Ecosattva Vows

By Joanna Macy

Based on my love of the world and understanding of deep interdependence of all things, I vow

- To live in Earth more lightly and less violently in the food, products and energy I consume.
- To commit myself daily to the healing of the world and the welfare of all beings; to discern and replace human systems of oppression and harm.
- To invite personal discomfort as an opportunity to share in the challenge of our collective liberation.
- To draw strength and guidance from the living Earth, from our ancestors and the future generations, and from our brothers and sisters of all species.
- To help others in their work for the world and to ask for help when I feel the need.
- To pursue a daily spiritual practice that clarifies my mind, strengthens my heart and supports me in observing these vows

Simple and Practical Steps toward Mitigating Climate Change

By Bhikkhu Bodhi

Introduction

Current discourse on climate change among “progressives” often pivots around two themes, depending on where they stand on the spectrum:

1. Spiritual progressives (including many Buddhist teachers) say that to stop climate change we need a “spiritual awakening of humanity,” “the enlightenment of all beings,” the “emergence of a divine humanity.”
2. Political progressives say that we need to change the whole political economy, to replace capitalism with a new social and economic system.

Granted that both these goals are desirable, are they realistic solutions to the immediate climate crisis? This seems improbable:

1. Humanity is unlikely to undergo a dramatic spiritual rebirth in the short time left to us, while ever more nations seek to embark on the path of economic development by burning fossil fuels.
2. Transformations in our social and economic system are likely to occur gradually and to require a long stretch of time for their impact to be felt.

However, we face a situation of utmost urgency:

1. Urgent because of what is at stake: mass extinctions; famines, droughts floods, and epidemics; traumatic ethnic, religious, and cross-border strife; the loss of human civilization.
2. Urgent because the window of opportunity is closing: we have at best only 20 or 30 years left to reduce carbon emissions by 80 percent; even better to arrive at 100 percent reduction by 2040. And we are moving in that direction far too slowly, if at all.

To emerge intact, we’ve got to get real. Spiritual people and progressives in particular have got to be practical and realistic. So what can we do that is simple, practical, and realistic—though by no means easy?

I. To abstain from all evil (application of the stick)

1. Rescind subsidies to fossil fuel corporations[1]
2. Impose a carbon tax to ensure environmental costs are built into the market price of carbon[2]
3. Reject trade agreements that allow corporations to prevail over sovereign governments[3]
4. Reject Keystone XL pipeline and other mega-oil pipelines
5. Prohibit oil trains (“train bombs”), a danger to communities along the routes
6. Shift away from model of industrial agriculture responsible for 30–32% of global emissions[4]

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II. To cultivate the good (offering carrots)

1. Provide subsidies and low-interest loans to clean, renewable energy projects
2. Finance refurbishing of old buildings to make them energy-efficient
3. Promote mass production of electric and hybrid cars
4. Develop more and better public transit to replace private cars
5. Promote agro-ecological models to replace industrial agriculture[5]
6. Shift to more climate friendly diets (plant-based over meats)[6]

III. To purify one's own mind

1. Develop contentment, the basis for a steady-state economy based on the principle of sufficiency, dedicated to qualitative growth rather than endless production and consumption.[7]
2. Utilize wisdom, to understand the long-range and long-term consequences of our actions, rooted in the subtle interconnections of diverse chains of causality.[8]
3. Arouse a heart of compassion, extend loving concern to all people everywhere, based on deep inner identification and affirmation of human dignity.[9]
4. Advocate for justice, to establish social, economic, and political institutions and laws, enabling everyone to unfold their potentials and realize their aspirations.[10]

IV. Benefit all sentient beings. How?

1. Vote: Though the political system is badly flawed, elections can make a difference. Vote only for candidates who admit human-caused climate change and are willing to act against it.
2. Write and sign: Write letters to your representatives, senators, and others. Call their offices and sign petitions and appeals to be sent to them. Local action may be most effective.
3. MOM & POP: Move our money, protect our planet: divestment from fossil fuel corporations & related firms.
4. Get moving: participate in marches and demonstrations to convey a message to those in power. Get moving in another way: join a movement to protect the climate: BCAN, 350, Climate Mobilization, Greenpeace, The Next System Project.
5. Take direct action: to block climate-destroying projects, such as oil rigs, pipe lines, fracking sites, etc. Beware of risks: long prison terms, large fines.

Footnotes

[1] As of July 2014, Oil Change International estimates the total value of U.S. subsidies to the fossil fuel industry at \$37.5 billion annually, including international finance. This does not include military, health, climate, or local pollution costs. These subsidies have increased dramatically as U.S. oil and gas production has increased.

(<http://priceofoil.org/fossil-fuel-subsidies/>)

[2] Fossil fuel companies are benefitting from global subsidies of \$5.3 trillion a year, equivalent to \$10m a minute every day, according to a startling new estimate by the International Monetary Fund. The vast sum is largely due to polluters not paying the costs imposed on governments by the burning of coal, oil and gas. These include the harm caused to local populations by air pollution as well as to people across the globe affected by the floods, droughts and

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storms being driven by climate change. Nicholas Stern of London School of Economics said that even the IMF's vast subsidy figure was a significant underestimate: "A more complete estimate of the costs due to climate change would show the implicit subsidies for fossil fuels are much bigger even than this report suggests." (The Guardian, 18 May 2015)

[3] "The Trans-Pacific Partnership would offer new rights to big polluters, including the right to sue governments in private trade courts over laws and policies that corporations allege reduce their profits." (Ilana Solomon, Sierra Club's Responsible Trade Program). For more on TPP see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNsHAHQh4Es>.

[4] The most potentially devastating impacts of industrial modes of agricultural production stem from their contribution to increased greenhouse gas emissions. Together, field-level practices represent about 15% of total human-made greenhouse gas emissions. Other processes requiring considerable amounts of energy result in an additional 15-17% of total man-made GGEs attributable to food systems. Hence agriculture is responsible for 30–32% of GGEs. (UN Report: The Transformative Potential of the Right to Food)

[5] The Rodale Institute in Pennsylvania found that agroecological modes of cultivation "could sequester (capture) up to 2,000 lb of carbon per acre per year from the atmosphere. By contrast, fields relying on chemical fertilizers lost atmosphere almost 300 lb of carbon per acre per year." According to the publication GRAIN, "if traditional systems of mixed farming were adopted throughout the world, about two thirds of the current excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would be captured in 50 years."

[6] The FAO estimated that the livestock sector was responsible for 18% of greenhouse gas emissions measured in CO₂ equivalent—a larger share than transport. Once livestock respiration and the loss of greenhouse gas reductions from photosynthesis that are foregone by using large areas of land for grazing or feedcrops are taken into account, livestock is found to be responsible for 51% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions.

[7] Numerous studies have shown that once a certain standard of material wellbeing is reached, increased consumption does not significantly contribute to happiness. Real happiness comes from human relationships, a sense of connection with other people and the cosmos, a sense of meaning, and aesthetic and spiritual fulfillment. Yet the modern economy, predicated on the premise that constant innovation, production, and consumption are the keys to happiness, perpetuates the conditions that portend eventual societal collapse.

[8] "Long-range consequences" means that the results of higher CO₂ emissions extend far beyond our immediate neighborhood. Causality is not restricted locally. All regions in the world are intimately and intricately interconnected. Burning coal in China can be a causal factor behind droughts in Africa, floods in Texas, failed monsoons in India. Cattle cultivation in Texas contributes to the melting of the Arctic ice, the collapse of ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica. "Long-term consequences" means that the impact of carbon emissions persists for generations. It is said that it takes 30-40 years—a generation—for CO₂ emissions to unfold their full potential, and increased emissions are cumulative.

[9] "I would be a good doctor to the sick, a guide to those who have strayed from the right path. I would be a light to those who wander in darkness. I would enable those in poverty to discover hidden treasure. A bodhisattva should thus benefit all beings with equal treatment, and bestow loving care on all beings alike. And why? Because if a bodhisattva serves all beings, that is equal to serving the Buddhas dutifully. To hold all beings in high esteem and render them respectful services, that is equal to revering and serving the Tathagatas." (The Vows of Samantabhadra)

[10] "Climate justice is a social justice issue. Climate Justice is working at the intersections of environmental degradation and the racial, social, and economic inequities it perpetuates. As the climate falls apart, families, communities, and lives are falling with it. Advocacy on behalf of the climate is advocacy on behalf of the billions of people whose lives depend on a healthy planet. Fixing an interconnected world demands interconnected movement; anyone who believes that all individuals deserve basic human and civil rights should see the climate crisis as an imminent threat." (See <http://www.peacefuluprising.org/what-is-climate-justice>; see too Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice, <http://www.mrfcj.org/>).

Buddhist Climate Change Statement to World Leaders

October 29, 2015

We, the undersigned Buddhist leaders, come together prior to the 21st Session of the Conference of Parties (COP21) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, in order to add our voices to the growing calls for world leaders to cooperate with compassion and wisdom and reach an ambitious and effective climate agreement.

We are at a crucial crossroads where our survival and that of other species is at stake as a result of our actions. There is still time to slow the pace of climate change and limit its impacts, but to do so, the Paris summit will need to put us on a path to phase out fossil fuels. We must ensure the protection of the most vulnerable, through visionary and comprehensive mitigation and adaptation measures.

Our concern is founded on the Buddha's realization of dependent co-arising, which interconnects all things in the universe. Understanding this interconnected causality and the consequences of our actions are critical steps in reducing our environmental impact. Cultivating the insight of interbeing and compassion, we will be able to act out of love, not fear, to protect our planet. Buddhist leaders have been speaking about this for decades. However, everyday life can easily lead us to forget that our lives are inextricably interwoven with the natural world through every breath we take, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Through our lack of insight, we are destroying the very life support systems that we and all other living beings depend on for survival.

We believe it imperative that the global Buddhist community recognize both our dependence on one another as well as on the natural world. Together, humanity must act on the root causes of this environmental crisis, which is driven by our use of fossil fuels, unsustainable consumption patterns, lack of awareness, and lack of concern about the consequences of our actions.

We strongly support "The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change," which is endorsed by a diverse and global representation of Buddhist leaders and Buddhist sanghas. We also welcome and support the climate change statements of other religious traditions. These include Pope Francis's encyclical earlier this year, *Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home, the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change, as well as the upcoming Hindu Declaration on Climate Change. We are united by our concern to phase out fossil fuels, to reduce our consumption patterns, and the ethical imperative to act against both the causes and the impacts of climate change, especially on the world's poorest.

To this end, we urge world leaders to generate the political will to close the emissions gap left by country climate pledges and ensure that the global temperature increase remains below 1.5

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degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels. We also ask for a common commitment to scale up climate finance, so as to help developing countries prepare for climate impacts and to help us all transition to a safe, low carbon future.

The good news is that there is a unique opportunity at the Paris climate negotiations to create a turning point. Scientists assure us that limiting the rise in the global average temperature to less than 1.5 degrees Celsius is technologically and economically feasible. Phasing out fossil fuels and moving toward 100 percent renewable and clean energy will not only spur a global, low-carbon transformation, it will also help us to embark on a much-needed path of spiritual renewal. In addition to our spiritual progression, in line with UN recommendations, some of the most effective actions individuals can take are to protect our forests, move toward a plant-based diet, reduce consumption, recycle, switch to renewables, fly less, and take public transport. We can all make a difference.

We call on world leaders to recognize and address our universal responsibility to protect the web of life for the benefit of all, now and for the future.

For these reasons, we call on all Parties in Paris:

1. To be guided by the moral dimensions of climate change as indicated in Article 3 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2. To agree to phase out fossil fuels and move towards 100 percent renewables and clean energy.
3. To create the political will to close the emissions gap left by country climate pledges so as to ensure that the global temperature increase remains below 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels.
4. To make a common commitment to increase finance above the US\$100 billion agreed in Copenhagen in 2009, including through the Green Climate Fund (GCF), to help vulnerable developing countries prepare for climate impacts and transition towards a low-carbon economy.

The time to act is now.

[\[signed by many eminent teachers from Asia, Europe, and the Americas\]](#)

The Earth As Witness: Dharma Teachers' Statement on Climate Change

Signed by 500+ Dharma teachers

<https://oneearthsangha.org/articles/dharma-teachers-statement-on-climate-change/>

Today humanity faces an unprecedented crisis of almost unimaginable magnitude. Escalating climate change is altering the global environment so drastically as to force the Earth into a new geological age. Unprecedented levels of suffering for all life on Earth, including human, will result. Significant reductions in greenhouse gases and other actions will be needed to reduce climate change to manageable levels. But more fundamental changes are also needed, and this is where we can draw guidance from the rich resources of the Buddha's teachings, the Dharma. This statement briefly describes core Buddhist insights into the root causes of the climate crisis and suggests ways to minimize its potentially tragic consequences.

As a starting point, the Dharma states that to formulate meaningful solutions to any problem we must first acknowledge the truth of our suffering. As shocking and painful as it may be, we must recognize that without swift and dramatic reductions in fossil fuel use and major efforts to increase carbon sequestration, global temperatures will rise close to or beyond 2 degrees C. This increase will lead to injury and death for millions of people worldwide and the extinction of many of the Earth's species. Millions more will experience severe trauma and stress that threaten their physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. These stresses will, in turn, trigger social and political unrest. In a grave injustice, low-income communities, poor nations, and people systematically subjected to oppression and discrimination, who contributed little to climate change, will initially be harmed the most. Even worse, as frightening as it is, if we fail to make fundamental changes in our energy, manufacturing, transportation, forestry, agricultural, and other systems along with our consumption patterns with utmost urgency, in mere decades irreversible climate shifts will occur that undermine the very pillars of human civilization. Only by recognizing these truths can we adopt a meaningful path toward solutions.

The Dharma teaches us the origin of our suffering. The majority of the world's climate scientists are unequivocal that on the external physical plane climate change is caused by the historic and ongoing use of fossil fuels and the greenhouse gases they generate when burned. Destructive land management practices such as clearing forests also contribute by reducing nature's capacity to sequester carbon. The Dharma informs us, however, that craving, aversion, and delusion within the human mind are the root causes of vast human suffering. Just as these mental factors have throughout history led to the oppression, abuse, and exploitation of indigenous peoples and others outside the halls of wealth and power, craving, aversion, and delusion are also the root causes of climate change. Climate change is perhaps humanity's greatest teacher yet about how these mental forces, when unchecked in ourselves and our institutions, cause harm to other people and the living environment. Led by industrialized nations, the desire for evermore material wealth and power has resulted in the reckless

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destruction of land and water, excessive use of fossil fuels, massive amounts of solid and toxic waste, and other practices that are disrupting the Earth's climate. However, by acknowledging and addressing these internal mental drivers, we can begin to resolve the external causes of climate change.

The Dharma offers hope by teaching us that it is possible to overcome the detrimental forces of craving, aversion, and delusion. We can use the climate crisis as a catalyst to acknowledge the consequences of our craving for more and more material wealth and the pursuit of power and realize we must change our assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors. We can use the climate crisis as a catalyst to educate ourselves about planetary processes so we understand that the Earth has ecological limits and thresholds that must not be crossed. By learning from our mistaken beliefs and activities, we can create more equitable, compassionate, and mindful societies that generate greater individual and collective wellbeing while reducing climate change to manageable levels.

Finally, the Dharma describes a pathway of principles and practices we can follow to minimize climate change and the suffering it causes. The first principle is wisdom. From this point forward in history we must all acknowledge not only the external causes of climate change, but the internal mental drivers as well, and their horrific consequences. To be wise we must also, individually and as a society, adopt the firm intention to do whatever is necessary, no matter what the cost, to reduce the climate crisis to manageable levels and over time re-stabilize our planet's climate.

The second Dharma principle is ethical conduct, which is rooted in a compassionate concern for all living beings in the vast web of life. We need to make a firm moral commitment to adopt ways of living that protect the climate and help restore the Earth's ecosystems and living organisms. In our personal lives, we should recognize the value of contentment and sufficiency and realize that, after a certain modest level, additional consumption, material wealth, and power will not bring happiness. To fulfill our wider moral responsibility, we must join with others, stand up to the vested interests that oppose change, and demand that our economic, social, and political institutions be fundamentally altered so they protect the climate and offer nurturance and support for all of humanity in a just and equitable manner. We must insist that governments and corporations contribute to a stable climate and a healthy environment for all people and cultures worldwide, now and in the future. We must further insist that specific scientifically credible global emission reduction targets be set and means adopted to effectively monitor and enforce them.

The third Dharma training, and the one that makes all of the others possible, is mindfulness. This offers a way to heighten our awareness of, and then to regulate, our desires and emotions and the thoughts and behaviors they generate. By continually enhancing our awareness, we can increasingly notice when we are causing harm to others, the climate, or ourselves, and strengthen our capacity to rapidly shift gears and think and act constructively. Mindfulness increases awareness of our inherent interdependency with other people and the natural

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environment and of values that enhance human dignity rather than subordinate people, animals, and nature to the craving for more material wealth and power.

As we each awaken to our responsibility to follow the path described in the Dharma to help us protect and restore the planet and its inhabitants, we may feel awed by the immensity of the challenge. We should take heart, however, in the power of collective action. Buddhists can join with others in their Sanghas, and our Sanghas can join hands and hearts with other religious and spiritual traditions as well as secular movements focused on social change. In this way we will support each other as we make the necessary shifts in perspectives, lifestyles, and economic and institutional systems required to reduce climate change to manageable levels. History shows that with concerted, unified, collective effort, changes that at one time seemed impossible have time and again come to pass.

When we come together to celebrate our love for the natural world and all of the beings that inhabit it, and when we take a stand to counter the forces of craving, aversion, and delusion, we reclaim our own inner stability and strength and live closer to the truth, closer to the Dharma. Together, we can seek to ensure that our descendants and fellow species inherit a livable planet. Individually and collectively, we will be honoring the great legacy of the Dharma and fulfill our heart's deepest wish to serve and protect all life.

Sixteen Core Dharma Principles to Address Climate Change

By the Dharma Teachers International Collaborative on Climate Change

The following dharma principles directly apply to the issue of climate disruption:

1. **Reverence for life:** From this point forward climate disruption is the overriding context for all life on earth, including humans. What we humans do will determine what life survives and thrives and in what form and locations.
2. **Happiness stems from helping others:** Our greatest personal happiness comes when we give of ourselves and help others. For example, many people instinctually help our neighbors after a natural disaster, which indicates that altruism and the desire to help others is built into our genes. We must grow and apply this to the marginalized among us that are at least initially hit hardest by climate disruption. This is the very opposite of the greed and self-centeredness that dominates today.
3. **We suffer when we cling:** The very nature of happiness is dependent on our capacity to give up our attachments and help others. This same principle must now be elevated and applied to public policies of all types.
4. **The ethical imperative:** All beings matter. We should act in ways that are beneficial for both self and others, acting out of a commitment to altruism and compassion for others.
5. **Interconnection and interdependence:** We must dissolve objectification of other people and nature and overcome the belief in a separate self that leads us to through a sense of kinship. Even as we let go of the delusion of an individual self that is separate from other people, we must let go of the delusion that humanity is separate from the rest of the biosphere. Our interdependence with the earth means that we cannot pursue our own well-being at the cost of its well-being. When the earth's ecosystems become sick, so do our bodies and our societies.
6. **Renunciation, simplicity:** To resolve climate disruption we must be willing to renounce attachments to things to contribute to the problem and live more simply.
7. **The relationship between the First and Second Noble Truth and capacity to learn to work with difficult states:** Understanding the suffering we have created symbolized by climate disruption and how it came about and that we can learn not to identify with it and instead work through distressing states such as fear, despair, etc.
8. **Opening to suffering as a vehicle for awakening:** The suffering caused by climate disruption provides an unprecedented opportunity for humans to learn from our individual and collective mistakes and manifest a great awakening. It is a special opportunity like never before. We can find ways to be happy—we can “tend and befriend” rather than fight (among ourselves), flee, or freeze. We can acknowledge that this is the way things are now, open to the suffering rather than becoming attached, and think and act in new ways.
9. **The interconnectedness of inner and outer, the individual and the collective (or institutional):** Climate disruption provides an unprecedented opportunity to understand the roots of the problem—which relate to the ways our minds work and how those patterns become embedded in collective and collective/ institutional practices and policies. This awareness can

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open the door to new ways of thinking and responding that will eventually produce different institutional practices and policies.

10. **Connection to diversity and justice issues:** The dharma principles and narratives must also apply to issues of diversity and social inclusion and justice. The beliefs in separateness etc that has produced the climate crisis also leads to social inequity and exclusion. People of color and other marginalized groups must be included.

11. **Buddhism as a social change agent:** The principles of Buddhism help us engage with life, not remove ourselves from it. The Buddha was actively engaged with his social and cultural contexts and for Buddhism to have relevance today it must help people understand how to engage in today's political and social contexts.

12. **Adhitthana or determination:** We are called to develop resolve, determination, and heroic effort now. We must have the courage to realize that we are being called to engage in this issue and that living the dharma will see us through the hard times.

13. **Remembering this precious human birth is an opportunity:** We must always remember that it is a rare and precious thing to be born as a human and we have been given a rare opportunity to act as stewards because humans are not only the source of destruction—we are also the source of great goodness.

14. **Love is the greatest motivator:** Our deepest and most powerful action comes out of love: of this earth, of each other. The more people can connect with and feel love for the Earth, the greater the likelihood that their hearts will be moved to help prevent harm. Children should therefore be a top priority. Need to help people realize what they love about life and what will be lost as climate disruption increases.

15. **The Sangha—and other forms of social support are essential:** The reality of climate disruption is a profound shock to many people and the only way to minimize or prevent fight, flight, freeze responses is to be supported by and work with others so people will not feel alone, can overcome despair, and develop solutions together. We need to go through this journey together, sharing our difficult reactions and positive experiences in groups and communities.

16. **The Bodhisattva:** The figure of the Bodhisattva, which is a unifying image of someone who is dedicated to cultivating the inner depths and to helping others, is an inspiring figure for our times.

The Time to Act is Now: A Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change

<https://oneearthsangha.org/statements/the-time-to-act-is-now/>

Today we live in a time of great crisis, confronted by the gravest challenge that humanity has ever faced: the ecological consequences of our own collective karma. The scientific consensus is overwhelming: human activity is triggering environmental breakdown on a planetary scale. Global warming, in particular, is happening much faster than previously predicted, most obviously at the North Pole. For hundreds of thousands of years, the Arctic Ocean has been covered by an area of sea-ice as large as Australia—but now this is melting rapidly. In 2014 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) forecast that the Arctic may be free of summer sea ice by mid-century. Other senior scientists consider this may happen within a decade.

Glaciers all over the world are also receding quickly. If current economic policies continue, the glaciers of the Tibetan Plateau, source of the great rivers that provide water for billions of people in Asia, are likely to disappear by mid-century. Severe droughts and crop failures are already affecting many countries. Major reports—from the IPCC, United Nations, European Union, and International Union for Conservation of Nature—agree that, without a collective change of direction, dwindling supplies of water, food and other resources could create widespread famine conditions, resource battles, and mass migration by mid-century—by 2030, according to the U.K.'s chief scientific advisor.

Global warming plays a major role in other ecological crises, including the loss of many plant and animal species that share this Earth with us. Oceanographers report that half the carbon released by burning fossil fuels has been absorbed by the oceans, increasing their acidity by about 30%. Acidification is disrupting calcification of shells and coral reefs, as well as threatening plankton growth, the source of the food chain for most life in the sea.

Eminent biologists and U.N. reports concur that “business-as-usual” will drive half of all species on Earth to extinction within this century. Collectively, we are violating the first precept—“do not harm living beings”—on the largest possible scale. And we cannot foresee the biological consequences for human life when so many species that invisibly contribute to our own well-being vanish from the planet.

Many scientists have concluded that the survival of human civilization is at stake. We have reached a critical juncture in our biological and social evolution. There has never been a more important time in history to bring the resources of Buddhism to bear on behalf of all living beings. The four noble truths provide a framework for diagnosing our current situation and formulating appropriate guidelines—because the threats and disasters we face ultimately stem from the human mind, and therefore require profound changes within our minds. If personal suffering stems from craving and ignorance—from the three poisons of greed, ill will, and

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delusion—the same applies to the suffering that afflicts us on a collective scale. Our ecological emergency is a larger version of the perennial human predicament. Both as individuals and as a species, we suffer from a sense of self that feels disconnected not only from other people but from the Earth itself. As Thich Nhat Hanh has said, “We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.” We need to wake up and realize that the Earth is our mother as well as our home—and in this case the umbilical cord binding us to her cannot be severed. When the Earth becomes sick, we become sick, because we are part of her.

Our present economic and technological relationships with the rest of the biosphere are unsustainable. To survive the rough transitions ahead, our lifestyles and expectations must change. This involves new habits as well as new values. The Buddhist teaching that the overall health of the individual and society depends upon inner well-being, and not merely upon economic indicators, helps us determine the personal and social changes we must make.

Individually, we must adopt behaviors that increase everyday ecological awareness and reduce our “carbon footprint”. Those of us in the advanced economies need to retrofit and insulate our homes and workplaces for energy efficiency; lower thermostats in winter and raise them in summer; use high efficiency light bulbs and appliances; turn off unused electrical appliances; drive the most fuel-efficient cars possible, and reduce meat consumption in favor of a healthy, environmentally-friendly plant-based diet.

These personal activities will not by themselves be sufficient to avert future calamity. We must also make institutional changes, both technological and economic. We must “de-carbonize” our energy systems as quickly as feasible by replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy sources that are limitless, benign and harmonious with nature. We especially need to halt the construction of new coal plants, since coal is by far the most polluting and most dangerous source of atmospheric carbon. Wisely utilized, wind power, solar power, tidal power, and geothermal power can provide all the electricity that we require without damaging the biosphere. Since up to a quarter of world carbon emissions result from deforestation, we must reverse the destruction of forests, especially the vital rainforest belt where most species of plants and animals live.

It has recently become quite obvious that significant changes are also needed in the way our economic system is structured. Global warming is intimately related to the gargantuan quantities of energy that our industries devour to provide the levels of consumption that many of us have learned to expect. From a Buddhist perspective, a sane and sustainable economy would be governed by the principle of sufficiency: the key to happiness is contentment rather than an ever-increasing abundance of goods. The compulsion to consume more and more is an expression of craving, the very thing the Buddha pinpointed as the root cause of suffering.

Instead of an economy that emphasizes profit and requires perpetual growth to avoid collapse, we need to move together towards an economy that provides a satisfactory standard of living for everyone while allowing us to develop our full (including spiritual) potential in harmony with the

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biosphere that sustains and nurtures all beings, including future generations. If political leaders are unable to recognize the urgency of our global crisis, or unwilling to put the long-term good of humankind above the short-term benefit of fossil-fuel corporations, we need to challenge them with sustained campaigns of citizen action.

Dr James Hansen of NASA and other climatologists have recently defined the precise targets needed to prevent global warming from reaching catastrophic “tipping points.” For human civilization to be sustainable, the safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is no more than 350 parts per million (ppm). This target has been endorsed by the Dalai Lama, along with other Nobel laureates and distinguished scientists. Our current situation is of profound concern since the level is already 400 ppm, and has been rising at 2 ppm per year. We are challenged not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to remove large quantities of carbon gas already present in the atmosphere.

As signatories to this statement of Buddhist principles, we acknowledge the urgent challenge of climate change. We join with the Dalai Lama in endorsing the 350 ppm target. In accordance with Buddhist teachings, we accept our individual and collective responsibility to do whatever we can to meet this target, including (but not limited to) the personal and social responses outlined above.

We have a brief window of opportunity to take action, to preserve humanity from imminent disaster and to assist the survival of the many diverse and beautiful forms of life on Earth. Future generations, and the other species that share the biosphere with us, have no voice to ask for our compassion, wisdom, and leadership. We must listen to their silence. We must be their voice, too, and act on their behalf.

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ARTICLES AND BOOKS

A Buddhist Response to the Climate Emergency, edited by John Stanley, David R. Loy, and Gyurme Dorje.

Buddhism and Ecology, edited by Marine Batchelor and Kerry Brown.

Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds, edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams.

Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter, edited by Amy Morgante.

Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism, edited by Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft.

Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology, by Allan Hunt Badiner.

Ecodharma: Buddhist Teachings for the Ecological Crisis, by David Loy.

Ecological Responsibility: A Dialogue With Buddhism, edited by Julia Martin.

Ecology, Ethics, and Interdependence: The Dalai Lama in Conversation with Leading Thinkers on Climate Change, edited by John Dunne and Daniel Goleman.

Green Buddhism: Practice and Compassionate Action in Uncertain Times, by Stephanie Kaza.

Hooked! Buddhist Writings on Greed, Desire, and the Urge to Consume, edited by Stephanie Kaza.

A Manual for Buddhism and Deep Ecology, by David H. Henning.

The Ordination of a Tree: The Thai Buddhist Environmental Movement, by Susan M. Darlington.

SEE ALSO: *Bibliography on Buddhism and Ecology*, compiled by Chris Ives,
http://fore.yale.edu/files/Buddhism_and_Ecology_Bibliography_Sept_2016.pdf

ORGANIZATIONS

Global Service Projects

GLOBAL BUDDHIST RELIEF: Hunger relief, education, farming projects.

globalbuddhistrelief.org

TZU CHI: International relief, medical care, education, environmental protection, community volunteering. <http://tw.tzuchi.org>

Education and Advocacy Groups

ASSOCIATION OF BUDDHISTS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: Founded in 2005, the Association of Buddhists for the Environment (ABE) is a network of Buddhist monks and nuns in Cambodia promoting environmental protection. ABE connects Buddhist clerics with ecology experts to use local pagodas as centers of environmental education. Although it is traditionally unusual for Buddhist clerics to engage with communities, forests and the environment have a unique sacredness in the tradition. Examples of ABE projects include small-scale community projects such as compost heaps, tree nurseries, and local water management systems. ABE also produces educational media, including a documentary film, and manages a website to build a network of conservation-minded Buddhists in the country. The organization has partnerships with both the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and UNESCO.

<http://abe-cambodia.blogspot.com/>

BOULDER ECO-DHARMA SANGHA: We are long-time members of several Tibetan, Insight and Zen meditation communities in Boulder [Colorado] who recognize that without swift and fundamental changes in our increasingly consumerist lifestyle, the ongoing planetary eco-crisis and dramatic alteration to the Earth's climate will cause widespread suffering and death for millions of people, and to many non-human species worldwide. We are committed to the preservation of a livable planet for our descendants and fellow species by strengthening the 'Three Pillars' of Eco-Dharma 1) deepening our psycho-spiritual consciousness and building resilience, 2) strengthening expression of inter-connectedness and wisdom in our ecodharma community, 3) studying the personal and institutional root causes of the ongoing eco-crisis to inspire individual and collective strategic action and build "One Movement" towards joy, health, harmony, kindness and justice. <http://boundlessinmotion.org/eco-dharma-sangha/>

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BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP: Aware of the interconnectedness of all things, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship cultivates conditions for peace, social justice, and environmental sustainability within our selves, our communities, and the world. <http://www.buddhistpeacefellowship.org/>

BUDDHIST CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK: The Buddhist Climate Action Network (BCAN) draws together Buddhists (and friends) from all traditions to take collective action on global, human-caused climate disruption. We incorporate Buddhist practices and principles as we work together with other interfaith groups and the larger climate movement on wise and compassionate efforts for a more stable climate. <http://globalbcan.org/>

EARTH HOLDER SANGHA: The Earth Holder Sangha is an affinity group within the Plum Village International Community of Engaged Buddhists, founded by Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh. First created in the US in 2015, the Earth Holder Sangha is guided by the engaged Buddhist ethics of the Five Mindfulness Trainings and Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. <https://earthholder.org/>. See also Thich Nhat Hahn's book "Love Letter to the Earth" and [his statement on climate change](#).

EARTH SANGHA: The Earth Sangha is a nonprofit Buddhist environmental organization located in the Washington D.C. area. Informed by the Buddhist principles of nonviolence, tolerance, self-awareness, and compassion, the Earth Sangha promotes care and respect for the environment through meditation and practical action. Based on the belief that Buddhist practice is enhanced by practical action in the world on behalf of other beings, the Earth Sangha encourages its members to see the connections between their practice and the well-being of life on earth. The philosophy behind the Earth Sangha suggests that the integration of Buddhist practice and hands-on environmentalism promotes health, concentration, ethics, compassion, and wisdom. Earth Sangha models environmental stewardship through its Potomac Native Forests Project, a conservation project designed to promote biodiversity, a cleaner environment, and community involvement in environmental restoration. http://fore.yale.edu/religion/buddhism/projects/earth_sangha/

ECO-DHARMA CENTRE: The Eco-Dharma Centre is situated in a beautiful and wild part of the Catalan Pyrenees. We offer courses, events and retreats which support the realisation of our human potential and the development of an ecological consciousness honouring our mutual belonging within the web of life – drawing on the Buddhist Dharma and the emerging ecological paradigms of our time. <http://www.ecodharma.com/>.

ECOSANGHA: EcoSangha is based on the teachings of Rev. Don Castro, of the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple, that to be a Buddhist is to be an environmentalist. The Seattle

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University sangha has come together through the fusion of those teachings with a Soto Zen meditation group led by philosophy professor, Jason Wirth, and with the participation of the White Cloud Buddhist Society. EcoSangha Seattle is sponsored by the Seattle University Campus Ministry Office. <https://www.ecosangha.net/>

ECO TEMPLE PROJECT: <http://jneb.jp/english/activities/buddhistenergy/eco-templeproject>

GLOBAL BUDDHIST CLIMATE CHANGE COLLECTIVE: Cultivating the insight of interdependence and compassion to act out of love, not fear, to protect our planet. We believe it imperative that the global Buddhist community recognizes our interdependence with one another as well as with the natural world. Together, we must be a network that inspires and empowers the Buddhist community to collectively take action on climate change.

<http://gbccc.org>

GREEN SANGHA: Green Sangha is dedicated to restoring our sense of oneness – healing our communities and the earth through mindful practice and awakened action. Inspired, awake individuals with a commitment to service deeply affect everything and everyone they touch. We aim to: 1) raise awareness of the interdependence of humans and our environment; 2) inspire mindfulness in daily lifestyle choices; and 3) catalyze systemic change in business practices and government policies. <http://greensangha.org>

INTERFAITH CLIMATE AND ECOLOGY NETWORK of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) was initiated in 2012 after many years of individual members in the INEB network engaging in a wide variety of Buddhist/faith based environmental activities. These activities came from our commitment as Buddhists to engage in the suffering we encounter in the world (1st Noble Truth). In this context, it has been the suffering throughout Asia brought about by environmental degradation from the modern industrial development process, such as deforestation and the destruction of numerous habitats. A critical aspect of this process has been the economical marginalization of rural communities and the exploitation and destruction of their environments for the creation of massive energy projects for the creation of high consumption urban lifestyles— e.g. massive dams that have relocated hundreds of thousands of people and nuclear power plants that endanger the entire fabric of life in rural areas. As such, INEB members in their environmental activities have pushed deeper into the structural and cultural causes of environmental suffering in their regions (2nd Noble Truth) and have articulated alternative visions based on Buddhist teachings (3rd Noble Truth) with activities to realize these visions (4th Noble Truth). The Eco-Temple Community Development Project is a plan to bring many of these activities in different regions together to bolster the integrative efficiency of each individual project and support and advance a wider movement among

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Buddhists, other communities of faith, and wider civil society, business and governmental initiatives to sustainable and ecological societies. <http://www.inebnetwork.org/ice-network>

KHORYUG is a network of Buddhist monasteries and centers in the Himalayas working together on environmental protection of the Himalayan region with the aim of practically applying the values of compassion and interdependence towards the Earth and all living beings that dwell here. As Buddhist practitioners, we believe that our actions must flow from our aspiration to benefit all sentient beings and safeguard our mother Earth and that this positive change in our societies must begin with ourselves first. KHORYUG aims to develop a partnership with community based organizations and NGOs wherever there is a member monastery or center so that together with our communities, we can help and protect all life on Earth now and for the future. Subscribe to get updates on the progress of KHORYUG, and to learn more about how you can help. <http://www.khoryug.com>

NAROPA UNIVERSITY ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT: The Environmental Studies department at Naropa University integrates a deep understanding of the living world through the study of science, systems, sacred ecology, historic and contemporary environmental movements, diverse perspectives and wisdom, social and environmental justice, contemplation, as well as engaging in hands-on, community-based work. We believe that through critical examination and understanding, engaging in deep relationships and developing appropriate skills, humans can learn how to respond to the ecological crisis and return to harmonious, sustainable relationships within the living world. The department offers a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies and a Master of Arts in Resilient Leadership with two graduate tracks, Climate Justice and Sustainable Systems. Our undergraduate program offers students from other departments the following minors: Ecology and Systems Science, Environmental Justice, Food Justice, Permaculture, Sacred Ecology, and Sustainability. Undergraduate majors in Environmental Studies may also complete a teacher licensure in Elementary Education. <https://www.naropa.edu/academics/masters/resilient-leadership/environmental-studies-department.php>

ONE EARTH SANGHA: One Earth Sangha's mission is to bring the essential wisdom and practices from the Buddhist tradition to collective engagement on critical ecological crises. We assert that activism is more effective and sustainable when grounded in mindfulness and compassion and that social engagement is an essential part of the spiritual path. We bring these two forces, and their corresponding communities, together through teachings, community building and mindful action. <https://oneearthsangha.org>

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ECODHARMA RETREAT CENTER is a low cost home for spiritual practice, with an emphasis on practice in nature. We are a supportive place for deep practice, a

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place for meditation, retreats, workshops and Ecodharma; a place for learning from nature, teachers and other participants, and a place for discovering ourselves in a wild environment. We bring Buddhism and Dharma back into the natural world where they originated, and in doing so, regain the connection and energy necessary to effectively address ecological and related social crises. We call all of this Ecodharma. <https://rockymountainecondharmaretreatcenter.org/>

TOUCHING EARTH SANGHA: Touching Earth Sangha is a meditation practice community dedicated to awakening the clarity and compassion at the source of our hearts and minds. We recognize the expression of that awakening as a responsible and caring lifestyle in harmony with the Earth and all creatures. We live communally following a rigorous practice schedule based on traditional Zen models, as well as allowing for innovation, and for inspiration from other traditions. We aim to be an example to the wider community of the possibility of sustainable lifestyles; living with little energy use, no car, virtually zero waste, and generally following the highest standards of ecological and social responsibility. <https://touchingearth.wordpress.com/>.

ZEN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES INSTITUTE is a religious nonprofit corporation of the Mountains and Rivers Order, located at the Zen Mountain Monastery on Tremper Mountain in upstate New York. Applying the Buddhist precepts to our relationship with the natural world, ZESI is dedicated to cultivating love and concern for the environment by recognizing the wisdom of the insentient and wild. Through workshops, retreats, courses, and research projects, ZESI promotes spiritually-grounded nature study and environmental advocacy. ZESI programs are conducted at training sites, wilderness camps, and retreat centers located within the Zen Mountain Monastery Nature Sanctuary, the Catskill Mountains Forest Preserve, and the Adirondack Mountains Forest Preserve. In addition to wilderness skills training, ZESI offers nature meditation retreats and programs grounded in Zen Buddhist meditation practices on a wide range of topics including: natural history, nature arts, and environmental ethics. In cooperation with the Zen Center of New York City, ZESI sponsors urban environmental programs in Brooklyn to encourage nature appreciation and environmental advocacy in urban settings. The Green Dragon Society, ZESI's environmental advocacy team, includes environmental scientists, lawyers, river engineers, bioethicists, and media representatives. ZESI has recently launched an Environmental Monitoring Program in the Adirondack and Catskill mountains to monitor water, air, and soil quality as well as a wetland Breeding Bird Census. ZESI membership includes a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, The Green Dragon Howl, and discounts on ZESI programs. <http://www.mro.org/zesi/>

HANDS-ON LOCAL PROJECTS (Seattle)

350seattle.org

Works toward climate justice by organizing people to make deep system change; resisting fossil fuels; building momentum for healthy alternatives; and fostering resilient, just, and welcoming communities. Climate change is a profound and urgent threat to all life on the planet—but most especially and most immediately to those in the Global South. Our economic system and its dependence on cheap fossil fuels have caused the devastation of communities and ecosystems; as US residents, we've been complicit in this, and we've benefited from it; we therefore have a responsibility to act. We believe in a just transition. We believe in our collective power. We need you.

Beacon Food Forest

The goal of the Beacon Food Forest is to design, plant and grow an edible urban forest garden that inspires our community to gather together, grow our own food and rehabilitate our local ecosystem. The Food Forest will include an Edible Arboretum with fruits gathered from regions around the world, a Berry Patch for canning, gleaning and picking, a Nut Grove with trees providing shade and sustenance, a Community Garden using the p-patch model for families to grow their own food, a Gathering Plaza for celebration and education, a Kid's Area for education and play. Join us to improve public health by regenerating our public land into an edible forest ecosystem. We work to reduce agricultural climate impact, improve our local food security, provide educational opportunities, and celebrate growing food for the benefit of all species.

<https://beaconfoodforest.org/>

Energy Conservation Credits

Seattle City Light, Washington State, and many energy utility companies have programs to help you save energy and money. They can help you decide -- and pay for -- the best energy improvements for your home or business. <https://energysolutions.seattle.gov/your-home/>

Farmers' Markets

Supporting and strengthening Washington's small family farm businesses by creating and operating vibrant, successful neighborhood farmers markets. Educating consumers about local farm products and the importance of supporting and preserving local farmland. Advocating for low income benefits programs to ensure equal food access. There are neighborhood markets in

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the University District, Capitol Hill, West Seattle, Columbia City, Lake City, Phinney, and Magnolia. <https://seattlefarmersmarkets.org/>

Neighborhood Clean-ups

Seattle Neighborhood Group, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks Department, and many other local community groups to pick up garbage, paint out graffiti, care for overgrown places, and get people out and working together in White Center, Delridge, West Seattle, the Central Area, Capitol Hill, and Southeast Seattle. <https://www.sngi.org/projects/cleans.php>

Got Green Seattle

People of color and low income families are exercising self-determination to create and govern resilient and healthy communities where they live, work, learn, play and pray. We envision healthy communities where all people: Work meaningful jobs that nourish our earth, our communities, and our souls; Eat affordable, healthy food that is grown with dignity for workers and the environment; Live in safe and sustainable housing, rooted in climate resilient neighborhoods; Care for our environment in our relationships to the land, the climate, and each other. <http://gotgreenseattle.org>

P-Patch

Community of gardeners at more than 75 sites throughout the city who enjoy organic urban agriculture at community-stewarded open spaces.

<https://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/programs-and-services/p-patch-community-gardening>

Puget Sound Sage

Puget Sound Sage combines research, innovative public policy and organizing to ensure all people have an affordable place to live, a good job, a clean environment, and access to public transportation. Deep partnerships between community, faith, labor, and environmental organizations are essential to building equity in the Puget Sound region.

<http://www.pugetsoundsage.org/>

Solid Ground's Marra Farm

Tour one of our farms and learn about the history of the neighborhood, organic gardening, bees, worms and soils, chickens, the environment, and eating healthy foods. Students taste, touch and smell herbs, vegetables and flowers. Learn about organic agriculture, food justice and

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urban farming through hands-on work. Depending on the season and day, students participate in hands-on activities and learn about worm bins, composting, weeding, planting, and more. Food grown at Lettuce Link's Giving Gardens go to local food banks, meal programs and neighbors. <https://www.solid-ground.org/get-involved/farm-tours-field-trips/>

Tilth Alliance

Our mission is to build an ecologically sound, economically viable and socially equitable food system. We enable community members to build healthy soil, restore the environment, manage pests naturally, protect water quality and teach others: soil and water stewardship training, garden hotline, Master Composter, and Sustainability Stewards Training. We provide Washington's farming community with peer-to-peer education, connect them with the land they need and support their business enterprises. We teach people of all ages and incomes to grow food: garden classes, school tours, mobile classrooms, summer farm and garden camps, teacher training, community learning gardens. We help consumers find local products through farmers' markets, community supported agriculture (CSA), and subsidized access for low-income families. Cooking and nutrition classes, events and youth programs.

<http://www.seattletilth.org/>