

## **THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION – FROM INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE TO ACTION**

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The world's natural environment is changing. It is a fact confirmed already 20-30 years ago by environmentalist scientists, calling for immediate action, which transformed in UN Climate Change Conference. Among the participants at such conferences are also the religious leaders, whose role is crucial on local levels, as more than 80% of the world population identifies themselves with a religious belief. The UN has recognised this potential to “wake up a giant” and use the power of reach and mobilisation of religious people who can stand up against environmental degradation and, thus, contribute to positive peace.

Issues of water scarcity, food security, climate change, deforestation, and less fertile ground, mainly affect local communities in the sense of poverty, hunger, and environmental devastation. This paper aims to: (1) show how religious organisations provide aid to the communities affected by environmental disasters; (2) what is the prevalent interreligious discourse on the environment, emphasising the crisis of humanity and its responsibility; (3) how the religious communities contribute to overall positive peace in UN Sustainability Goals.

Among the case studies used, the author will specifically emphasise the role of religion in the environmental crisis around the Mekong River, based on the field trip and research done in 2020 among the Thai farmers and monks in the Chiang Khong region.