

# Science and Faith Unite on Biodiversity

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University of Oxford

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## Press Release:

We are a group of scientists and religious believers, who may disagree on some issues, but are united on one: the need for action to halt the damage that human activities are now doing to the natural world.

The evidence for such damage is solid, convincing and increasing. From the Brundtland Commission Report of 1987 to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment of 2005, and now to the recently published 4<sup>th</sup> Global Environment Outlook of the United Nations Environment Programme, it has become clear that, in the words of its Executive Director, “The systematic destruction of the Earth’s natural and nature-based resources has reached a point where the economic viability of economies is being challenged, and where the bill we hand to our children may prove impossible to pay.”

Human society is wholly dependent on the good health of the natural environment, and the wide range of services it provides. Such services include the oxygen we breathe, the water we drink, the nutrients and pollination of the crops we eat, the land we inhabit, traditional medicines, indeed our very existence. The protection of life on Earth is thus a practical as well as a profoundly moral imperative for us all.

The impact of the damage we are now doing, and its effects on human society, vary according to different circumstances; but those countries which have led the way towards our current consumer society have particular responsibilities. The prospects for future generations, particularly those who live in poverty, are bleak. Within the lifetimes of many of today’s young people, there will be critical shortages of food and water, exhaustion of some vital resources, increasing pollution of land, sea and air, and further destabilization of climate, all with dangerous consequences for society. We already know much of what needs to be done, and have the ability to do it.

Despite our differences of approach, we are at one in our belief that humans must find a way to live more lightly on the Earth and do more to protect biodiversity of the lands and seas. Business as usual is not an option. We need to think and then to act very differently, whether as individuals, organizations, national governments or global institutions. The time left for us to change direction is very short. Circumstances may vary according to country, but we need action in all of them now. Collectively we are committed to promoting within our respective communities greater awareness of the importance of biodiversity to human well-being and call on others to join us in positive actions to protect and repair the natural environment.

## **Signatures**

**Prof Peter Atkins**  
Lincoln College  
University of Oxford

**The Rev'd Charlotte Bannister-Parker**  
Founder  
Friends of Faith

**Fr Chris Boles SJ**  
Director  
Lauriston Jesuit Centre

**The Rt Revd & Rt Hon Richard Chartres**  
Bishop of London

**Mary Colwell**  
BBC Natural History Unit

**Prof Richard Fortey**  
Natural History Museum

**Claire Foster**  
Lay Canon  
St. Paul's

**The Rev'd Dr Giles Fraser**  
Vicar of Putney

**Prof Mike Hulme**  
School of Environmental Sciences  
UEA, Norwich

**Dr Paul Jepson**  
Oxford University Centre for the Environment

**Fazlun Khalid**  
Founder Director  
Islamic Foundation for Ecology and  
Environmental Sciences  
Birmingham

**Alex Kirby**  
Journalist

**David Lorimer**  
Programme Director  
Scientific and Medical Network

**Prof David MacDonald**  
Director, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit  
Oxford Zoology Department

**Prof Mary Midgley**

**Keith Patrick Cardinal O'Brien**  
Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh

**Dr Ali Paya**  
Associate Professor of Philosophy  
National Research Institute for Science Policy  
(Iran)

**The Rev'd Dr John Polkinghorne**  
Cambridge University

**Prof Sir Ghillea Prance FRS**  
Scientific Director  
The Eden Project

**Prof Hugh W. Pritchard**  
Seed Conservation Department & Millennium  
Seed Bank Project  
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

**Tim Radford**  
Journalist

**Dame Jessica Rawson**  
Warden, Merton College  
University of Oxford

**Prof Callum M. Roberts**  
Environment Department  
University of York

**Sir Crispin Tickell**  
Director, Policy Foresight Programme  
University of Oxford

**Camilla Toulmin**  
Director  
International Institute for Environment and  
Development

**Prof Peter Wadhams**  
Professor of Ocean Physics  
University of Cambridge

**Bishop Kallistos Ware**  
Orthodox Christian Church

**David Wasdell**  
Director  
Unit for Research into Changing Institutions

**Institutional affiliation is given for identification purposes only.**

**All signatories do so as individuals expressing their personal opinions and not as representatives of their organizations.**