

12. A Message from Tibetan Buddhism

The Dalai Lama

I am pleased to send my warm greetings to participants of the conference on “Joining Science and Theology to End Plastic Pollution, Protect Health, and Advance Social Justice.”

When I was growing up in Tibet, it was natural for Tibetans on the road to stop by a river when thirsty and drink water without any hesitation. Tibet then was fortunate to have a clean environment and so the purity of the river water was certain. It was only when I had to leave Tibet and in the years that passed by when I was made to understand that one should not be drinking from the rivers as they would be polluted. Over the years, in my meetings with ecologists, environmentalists, and scientists, I learned that this is a very serious matter.

Similarly, modern science informs us that something like plastic that has been useful in our daily life is also a dangerous pollutant that threatens life on this planet. All of us are the same in desiring happiness and not wanting suffering. Therefore, ignoring the negative impact of plastics and misusing them for short-term purposes is going to cost humanity greatly in the long run. From that viewpoint, the key thing is the need to have a sense of Universal Responsibility, the real source of happiness.

Also, in consideration of our future generations, we must do our best not to exploit every available thing, including plastics. With a genuine sense of universal responsibility, as the central motivation and principle, we must ensure that the direction of our relations with the environment must be well balanced.

It is also encouraging that the UN has over the years expanded its task to take on the challenge of safeguarding the long-term health of our planet and ourselves. Each and every one of us living on this planet has the responsibility to do our part. Your conference is serving a very useful purpose from this perspective in sensitizing individuals, organizations, and

governments about the importance of doing away with plastic for the good of humanity.

With my prayers and good wishes for the success of the conference.



The fourteenth **Dalai Lama** is the highest spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism.