

## International Seminar on Islam and Ecological Sustainability (IAIS Malaysia, 3 December 2019)

*Shahino Mah Abdullah*

Islamic teachings promote environmental stewardship, including the accountability and responsibility of humanity towards maintaining God's balanced creation. Therefore, Islam should undoubtedly be regarded as the 'green' religion. In wanting to bring up modern environmental challenges, especially relating to ecological issues, IAIS organised the 'International Seminar on Islam and Ecological Sustainability' on 3 December 2019, with Majlis Agama Islam Wilayah Persekutuan as its strategic partner, in collaboration with University of Malaya, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Global Environmental Centre, and Grass Malaysia. The seminar began with a warm welcoming address by IAIS Founding CEO, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Hashim Kamali. Then, YB Datuk Seri Dr. Mujahid Yusof Rawa, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs), officiated the seminar, highlighting the latest initiatives of the government in the implementation of *Rahmah* as a national model. The acronym of the word R.A.H.M.A.H, according to him, contains the model's core values, namely, Amicable (*Ramah*), Peaceful (*Aman*), Harmonious (*Harmoni*), Genial (*Mesra*), Environmentally Friendly (*Alami*) and Respectful (*Hormat*). The '*Alami*' value is an integral part of the model that mainly promotes the protection of the environment (*hifz al-Bi'ah*). After his speech, the minister launch two books published by IAIS, namely: *Laskar Alam: Modul Pembudayaan Kelestarian Alam*, and *Modul Islam & Pemeliharaan Sungai: Melestarikan Syiar Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin*. The book launch received coverage from local official television broadcaster, Berita RTM (Modul Pendidikan Alam Sekitar Dilancar IAIS), and featured in several newspapers.

The seminar continued with its main agenda by inviting local and international figures to deliver keynote speeches. For the first keynote speech, Sahibus Samahah Dato' Seri Dr. Zulkifli Mohamad Al-Bakri, Mufti of the Federal Territory of Malaysia delivered his presentation entitled, "The Role of Religion in Achieving Ecological Sustainability in the Islamic World." The Mufti expressed his concern about environmental protection, advising the audience to avoid *fasad* (corruption) and to keep the environmental balance. Then, Prof. Datuk Seri Ir. Dr. Zaini Ujang, the latest recipient of Tokoh Maal Hijrah, delivered the second keynote speech entitled "Ecoshift: Islamic Ecosophy towards Environmental Sustainability." During his speech, he emphasised that what is more important than the government's environmental policy is the cultural changes needed to promote a higher level of awareness about environmental

issues. After the lunch hour and Zohor prayer, Dr. Fazlun Khalid, Founder & Director, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (UK) continued the seminar with the third keynote speech, entitled, “Sustainability: The Economics of Futility.” As a renowned Muslim global environmentalist, he revealed the dark side of the economic system based on *riba*’ (usury), initiated by a certain country as ‘virus money’ to enhance the lifestyle of the people without consideration for the natural world. Finally, the seminar ended with the fourth keynote speech by Dr. Kalithasan Kailasam, Director of River Care Programme at the Global Environmental Centre, entitled “River Care & Rehabilitation in Malaysia: Latest Developments.” He mentioned that the actual role of drains and rivers is to allow rainwater to flow. After sharing the development of the river rehabilitation programme in Kuala Lumpur, he highlighted that we have to keep the river clean since it belongs to us all.

### **Myth of ‘Free Media’ and Fake News in the Post-Truth Era (IAIS Malaysia, 7 December 2019)**

*Apnizan Abdullah*

The programme was held on 7 December 2019 at 10 am at IAIS Malaysia. The topic of discussion comes from the book authored by the speaker, Dr. Kalinga Seneviratne. The book essentially reveals both the myth and truth of the free media and of fake news doctrines in the post-truth world order. The author starts his book by questioning the existence of the truth era. The book also highlights the disruption to the news media that has arisen from the emergence of the internet. The author asserts that media ‘liberalisation’ has weakened the basic premise of Libertarian Media Function Theory, which states that the media is the ‘Fourth Estate’ that protects the citizens from abuses of power by the government. He also explained how excessive commercialisation of the media and the commodification of news has changed journalism all around the world.

The sharing session commenced with an introductory remark by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, the President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST). Dr. Chandra pointed out that the manipulation of freedom of expression via free media and fake news doctrines is a global phenomenon. He pointed out that Westerners who have championed the idea of freedom of expression and democracy are the real actors in this mainstream manipulation. This scenario has happened in many areas, including in science, the economy, technology and many more. The real aim behind it is to gain control over resources (such as oil) and nations.