

Sustainability and building Earth

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In previous articles, we briefly discussed the definition of sustainable development, its three main areas, and the mistake of focusing on just one aspect of sustainability, such as financial sustainability. Instead, we emphasized the need to activate and achieve all aspects of sustainability. We suggest, quite simply, adding the word “sustainability” to any concept or issue an institution is concerned with and then working towards achieving and activating it. For example, by attaching “sustainability” to “organization,” we strive for “organizational sustainability.” Similarly, with “operational sustainability,” “improvement sustainability,” and “institutional sustainability” – all of which need to be realized.

We previously mentioned the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the role of countries or institutions in engaging with them positively. But what does positive engagement mean? How do we begin to interact with these goals? Do we have to accept the SDGs exactly as they are written? To answer these questions, we'll discuss two key points:

1. How do we positively engage with these goals from our understanding of the importance of sustainability within our culture and Islamic teachings?

2. What reservations might we have about the wording of certain goals or their interpretation from a human and logical perspective?

If we examine the primary domains of sustainability – economy, environment, society, and governance – we will find that these were emphasized

and systematically activated in our civilization and historical trajectory. This indicates that these global ideas and institutional directives will naturally find their place in our reality if we approach them correctly. Their importance or usefulness won't require much explanation but will need activation in people's lives and an emphasis on revitalizing and re-focusing on them.

Our civilization and culture have defined and built an integrated methodology for how individuals and institutions deal with these sustainability domains in their modern sense. This methodology serves as a guiding framework, regulating and directing human actions, rooted in the understanding that humans are stewards of the earth. Our task is to develop it, not destroy it. We must live in harmony with natural laws and not according to harmful desires that lead to the destruction of our environment, economy, or society. As Allah has commanded: we are meant to build and cultivate the earth, not exploit or ruin it “He produced you from the earth and settled you in it” (Surat Hud, 61).

This civilized methodology aims to foster a mindset in individuals and institutions that drives them toward leaving a lasting impact, maintaining continuity, and making a difference in the environment, economy, and human life. From this perspective, we can understand the consistent condemnation of corruption in the earth and the strong disapproval of those who spread it. We also see the encouragement for development, growth, and sustainability, even in the most difficult and uncertain circumstances. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) famously said: “If the Hour (the Day of Judgment) is established and one of you has a sapling in his hand, if he is able to plant it before the Hour is established, then let him plant it.”

This prophetic teaching emphasizes the importance of positive action and sustainability, even in moments of crisis, highlighting the value Islam places on continuous efforts to improve and sustain life on Earth.

To be continued



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