



THE DALAI LAMA

MESSAGE

On this 50th anniversary of Earth Day, our planet is facing one of the greatest challenges to the health and well-being of its people. And yet, in the midst of this struggle, we are reminded of the value of compassion and mutual support. The current global pandemic threatens us all, without distinctions of race, culture or gender, and our response must be as one humanity, providing for the most essential needs of all.

Whether we like it or not, we have been born on this earth as part of one great family. Rich or poor, educated or uneducated, belonging to one nation or another, ultimately each of us is just a human being like everyone else. Furthermore, we all have the same right to pursue happiness and avoid suffering. When we recognize that all beings are equal in this respect, we automatically feel empathy and closeness towards others. Out of this comes a genuine sense of universal responsibility: the wish to actively help others overcome their problems.

Our mother earth is teaching us a lesson in universal responsibility. This blue planet is a delightful habitat. Its life is our life; its future, our future. Indeed, the earth acts like a mother to us all; as her children, we are dependent on her. In the face of the global problems we are going through it is important that we must all work together.

I came to appreciate the importance of environmental concern only after escaping from Tibet in 1959, where we always considered the environment to be pure. Whenever we saw a stream of water, for instance, there was no worry about whether it was safe to drink. Sadly, the mere availability of clean drinking water is a major problem throughout the world today.

We must ensure that the sick and the valiant health-care providers throughout the world have access to the fundamental necessities of clean water and proper sanitation to prevent the uncontrolled spread of disease. Hygiene is one of the bases of effective health care.

Sustainable access to properly equipped and staffed health-care facilities will help us meet the challenges of the current pandemic that ravages our planet. It will also offer one of the strongest defenses against future public health crises. I understand that these are precisely the objectives set forth in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals that address challenges to global health.

As we face this crisis together, it is imperative that we act in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation in order to provide for the pressing needs, particularly of our less fortunate brothers and sisters around the world. I hope and pray that in the days ahead, each of us will do all we can to create a happier and healthier world.

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