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Islam and Sustainable Development

New Worldviews

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Foreword

His Royal Highness El Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan

Chairman, West Asia–North Africa Forum

In the current context of the ‘Arab Spring’, efforts emanating from within the West Asia–North Africa region to better understand, to inspire as well as to create proactive and home-grown approaches to development are required more than ever. With *Islam and Sustainable Development*, Professor Odeh Al-Jayyousi has made a positive move in that direction by attempting to demonstrate that some of the most cherished concepts and paradigms found in Islam are not only consistent with current notions of sustainable development, but may also be employed as a means to inspire others to participate more fully in the type of development that seeks to go beyond mere poverty reduction.

The author points out that Western models of development – while providing valuable references and starting points – should probably not be implemented ‘as is’ in Eastern contexts. While much development thinking has long been making this point, attempts to consolidate some of the specifics on how, exactly, development may be approached with greater efficacy and success in eastern and Islamic communities is a more recent phenomenon.

As an example from Jordan, a country with one of the most fragile and water-deficient ecosystems on the planet, I would like to mention that we are promoting approaches emphasising ‘science, stewardship and tradition,’ as a current form of the concept of ‘*Hima*.’ This Arabic word literally means ‘protected area’, but carries layered connotations of meaning which support a community-based environmental resource management system. Valued as part of our knowledge heritage, the concept promotes acts of conservation and environmental protection that are intertwined with social justice. We believe that our region’s rich tradition of Islamic ecological ethics can enable a platform for social investments locally that also provides ballast for and therefore greatly enhances, as opposed to threatens, all other types of investments – for example, green energy projects.

Development methodologists and theorists who anticipate or currently support development within the West Asia–North Africa region and who are seeking a language which will add inspirational value to technical approaches may find what they are looking for in this volume.