

A Geneva hub for The Green Pilgrimage Network: Partnership with R20 Regions of Climate Action

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Arnold Schwarzenegger's Climate Action initiative for regional leaders has put pilgrim cities high up on its agenda through a new partnership with the Green Pilgrimage Network, an international network of pilgrim places committed to being environmental leaders. An MOU was signed yesterday at Shima, in Mie Prefecture, during the ARC-Jinja Honcho Ise Traditions for the future conference.

"When it comes to moving the world to a sustainable, low-carbon, clean energy future, I believe the science is in; the debate is over; and the time for action is now," Governor Schwarzenegger said in a message of support.

"But despite clear scientific evidence and overwhelming support of the people, not to mention so many fantastic technologies and investors looking for opportunities, our national and global leaders are failing to seriously combat climate change. That's why I have made a clean energy future my mission through the R20, just as I have done with physical fitness for decades."

"I strongly believe that religious and faith leaders can demonstrate, in their respective Pilgrim cities, that this better future is possible, inspiring hundreds of millions of pilgrims to take action, just like Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi inspired human rights revolutions. That's why I'm excited to welcome the Green Faith in Action campaign launched by the Green Pilgrim Network and the R20. Together, we can really make a difference."

Through its Geneva office, Schwarzenegger's R20 Regions of Climate Action will now partner with pilgrim cities in the Green Pilgrimage Network to bring in technical expertise and investment partners to deliver renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure projects. They will work together to promote pilgrim cities to become innovative models of faith-consistent values, environmental care and green economy that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.

The R20 Regions of Climate Action (R20) office in Geneva will be the focal point for working with the GPN to identify up to eight pilgrim cities as initial places where green pilgrimage principles can be put into practice most effectively.

The list of sites under consideration include: Etchmiadzin (Armenia), Hangzhou/Ziyang (China), Lalibella (Ethiopia), Lourdes (France) Puri/Dwarka/Amritsar/Nanded (India) and Makkah (Saudi Arabia). All of them will be chosen with the potential of their successes being showcased and replicated elsewhere.

The new partnership will also aim to promote model green pilgrim cities as examples of environmental action to the COP 21 in Paris in December 2015.

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Background

The Green Pilgrimage Network was set up in 2011 by the UK-based Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) with the vision of pilgrim cities and places becoming models of care for the environment, and of pilgrims leaving a positive footprint on the Earth. It works with some 30 key pilgrim sites around the world

The R20 Regions of Climate Action (R20) is a not for profit public-private partnership with the vision of mobilizing the regions of the world to be the leaders for green growth. R20 brings together subnational governments, businesses, financial institutions, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, intergovernmental organizations, and the United Nations. It was founded in 2010 by Californian Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and other subnational (including US State) leaders in cooperation with the United Nations. Its mission is to support local governments in the creation and successful financing of renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure projects. The projects chosen are ones that produce measurable environmental, social and economic benefits, as well as attractive financial returns for investors.

R20 is working to establish a **R20 SAAME** (Saudi Arabia and Middle East) office in Saudi Arabia province, with the aim of pioneering green initiatives in the pilgrim cities of Makkah (the site of the annual Hajj pilgrimage) Medina (the destination of Umrah, second most important pilgrimage to Muslims after Hajj) and Jeddah.

Links

R20 <http://regions20.org>

GPN www.greenpilgrimage.net

ARC www.arcworld.org