

Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal

*Of what faith are the waters,
Of what faith the trees,
Of what faith the bounteous mother earth,
Of what faith Ahura Mazda,
Of what faith was Zarathushtra,
Of that faith and of that Law as well,
A Mazda-worshipper am I.*

Yasna 12.7

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Reverence for the environment has been a major precept of Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian religion, and its present day followers. This respect for nature is embedded in Zoroastrian hymns that are devoted to specific elements, such as the sun, the moon, water, and fire. Objects symbolizing elements of nature play an important role in all religious ceremonies, reminding us to be aware of what nature provides us with and of our critical role in preserving it. As we move into the 21st century, this ancient value of respect for the environment is even more relevant, in terms of achieving sustainability and peace for the entire global community. Through its interactions with the United Nations (UN), the Federation of Zoroastrian Associations of North America (FEZANA) strives to make the environmental message of its faith tradition relevant to our modern global community.

The UN will hold its 58th Annual DPI/NGO conference from September 7-9th, 2005 at its headquarters in New York City. The Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) section of the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the UN headquarters serves as the liaison between NGOs across the world and the UN. This year's conference, "***Our Challenge: Voices for Peace, Partnerships and Renewal***," will draw more than 2,500 NGO representatives and will highlight their efforts to eradicate poverty, promote human rights, and enhance collective human security through multilateral cooperation and deeper partnerships within civil society. The conference will focus on the concerns addressed in Secretary-General Kofi Annan's 2005 report "*In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all.*" In his report, the Secretary-General emphasizes, "Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."

FEZANA will send five representatives to this year's DPI/NGO conference. Zarathushti tradition emphasizes ***hamazori***, being one with nature, creation and all of humanity. Toward this end, the World Zarathushti Cultural Foundation shall revive an ancient Persian tradition of tree planting called "Rooze Darakthkari" on the outskirts of Pune, India. The nexus between the environment and development which promotes world peace has been recognized by the world community; note the award of the 2004 Nobel Prize to Wangari Maathai, a speaker invited to this year's NGO conference, who was honored for her leadership in promoting the Green Belt Movement in Africa. Zoroastrians have long been recognized for their philanthropic contribution to civil society. Through their interactions with the UN and other NGOs, FEZANA delegates endeavor to learn how Zoroastrians can serve humanity as world citizens.

About FEZANA: FEZANA, the umbrella organization for North American Zoroastrian associations, has been a registered non-profit, religious, and charitable organization since 1987. It is dedicated to the task of promoting the study, understanding, and practice of the Zoroastrian faith and the welfare of its followers.

Zoroastrianism: Zoroastrianism (also known as the Zarathushti religion or Zarathushtrianism) is one of the world's oldest surviving monotheistic religions. At one time, the state religion of the ancient Persian empires (including modern-day Iran), Zoroastrianism embraces the worship of one God (Ahura Mazda) and is based on the revelations and teachings of the prophet Zarathushtra (circa 1400 B.C.E). The Zoroastrian faith calls upon its followers to pursue an ethical life through a three-fold path of "Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds."

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