

A Shared Destiny

Written by Tzu Chi Foundation
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[[Master's Teachings](#)]

In a conversation with key decision makers from Indonesia's co-operative alliance for rural farmers and fishermen, Dharma Master Cheng Yen conveyed her concern about threats to marine life and ocean contamination.

“As global citizens, we share a common fate. You are concerned about the over-depletion of marine resources. I see oceans getting more polluted due to human population growth and the increase in industrial activities. Pollution is threatening the marine ecosystem and its impact goes beyond the Indonesian fishing industry and food security for Indonesians. It is actually a global issue, as people in many countries rely on the oceans for their livelihoods.”

“We also should be aware of what we are doing to the health of marine life. Like humans, marine creatures have the innate nature to avoid danger and fight for survival. Yet, we create greater threats to their survival every day as the human demand for seafood grows and fishing fleets increase over the years to hunt them down. As fellow living beings, we can only imagine how their fear and nervousness have intensified exponentially as their chance for survival has gotten slimmer. If stress can induce sickness and social issues for humans, it will likely do the same for living creatures of the sea. Inevitably, they will get sick.”

“On top of that, over-exploitation by the fishing industry means excessive activities that create more waste, both human and industrial, polluting the oceans. The marine creatures' already fragile health is ruined by such toxic pollution. It will surely not be good for people's health to eat these sick and contaminated marine creatures as seafood.”

To address the root cause, what can we do to protect marine life and to clean up our oceans? Dharma Master Cheng Yen offered her suggestion:

“To begin with, we need to recognize that recovery will take a while. It will be best to leave the oceans alone to purify themselves naturally in due course. Then, the marine ecosystem will return to its natural beauty and wellbeing. In addition, we should try our best to prevent pollution from entering the oceans. That can only be achieved by identifying and reducing the sources of pollution, which come from many different human activities.”

“There are ways that people who rely on the oceans for their livelihood can adapt. They can consider transition into algaculture, a form of aquaculture by farming species of algae, or into the waterway cleanup industry. These industries provide job opportunities that are environmentally friendly.”

The looming risk of global food shortage was the other conversation topic at the meeting. Dharma Master Cheng Yen was alarmed by the pressure on global food supply from extreme weather patterns like floods and droughts. Since Indonesia has outstanding natural resources to

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develop its agriculture, she hoped Indonesia would step up and contribute to world food security. She encouraged these Indonesian visitors:

“Hearing that you are considering how to reverse the damages done to the oceans, I am glad to see that you share my vision for a more sustainable future. In a time when our hectic modern lifestyle leads people to be short-sighted and focus on immediate profits, thank goodness for likeminded people like you. Please don’t lose sight of our future. We should find ways to maintain the natural resources necessary to sustain our health for the long-term and for future generations as well. To be short-sighted and only care about current profits while disregarding future consequences of our actions creates serious concerns. We really need to consider the whole picture and have a global perspective on what we do. You can build social responsibility into your business and serve as a role model to show people a livelihood program that can also protect our environment and safeguard our future.”

Written by the Jing Si Abode English Editorial Team
Based on Dharma Master Cheng Yen’s conversations with visitors in Chinese