



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

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Christine Muller, General Secretary
Arthur Lyon Dahl Ph.D.

From the Editor, Request for information for upcoming newsletters

This newsletter is an opportunity for IEF members to share their experiences, activities, and initiatives that are taking place at the community level on environment, climate change, and sustainability. All members are welcome to contribute information about related activities, upcoming conferences, news from like-minded organizations, recommended websites, book reviews, etc. Please send information to newsletter@ief.org

Please share the Leaves newsletter and IEF membership information with family, friends, and associates and encourage interested persons to consider becoming a member of the IEF.

IEF Webinars

By IEF Webinar Coordinator Khela Baskettt

27th IEF Webinar

Building Inclusive, Cohesive Communities Worthy of the Future

Speaker: Gary Reusche

4 May, 2024

10am PDT British Columbia/California
1pm EDT Ottawa/New York
6pm BST London
7pm CEST Central Europe
7pm Lilongwe, Malawi
8pm EAT Kampala, Uganda
8pm EEST Ukraine

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF-Reusche>



Image: 2024-3-15 URI Garden, Kingston RI, C. Muller

Description:

This talk will cover a vision of the future - specifically the next two decades - where individuals are integral parts of their local communities. Examples from rural communities will be discussed, and the challenge of applying these successes to urban communities will be examined, with a focus on environmental sustainability. Reflections from living in Ukraine will be included.

Bio:

Gary Reusche is a social and economic development worker living in Ukraine. Combining a PhD in agricultural science with an MBA in management, he managed projects in Central America, Africa, South Asia, the ex-Soviet Union and Ukraine. During the past 40 years, Gary has worked with agricultural communities in over 60 countries. His rural and agricultural activities have been focused on rural communities. His passion is to correlate Bahá'í social principles with current realities in the world and to work for a sustainable future in a united world. As a social activist, he lives on a small farm and runs a residential vacation school for groups of children, youth, and adults striving to build a culture based on universal spiritual principles.

28th IEF Webinar

Reefs of Hope: Helping Coral Reefs Adapt to Rapidly Warming Seas

Speaker: Austin Bowden-Kerby
June 1st 2024

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF-ReefsOfHope>

Image Credit: Reefs of Hope



Report of the 26th IEF Webinar

Workshop: How to Talk about Climate Change

The webinar took place on 6 April. We first watched parts from a [TedTalk](#) by Dr. Katharine Hayhoe on *the most important thing you can do to fight climate change*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BvcToPZCLI&t=102s>

Then we discussed the following questions:

- What psychological and social forces cause climate denial?*
- What should we avoid when talking about climate change?*
- What should we emphasize when talking about climate change?*

Many good ideas were shared by the 25 or more participants from diverse backgrounds. They came from Austria, Canada, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Iceland, Iran, Malawi, Nepal, the Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the USA.

You can check out the IEF webinar page for reports and recordings of past webinars:
<https://iefworld.org/lectures>

A Systems View of Justice

Arthur Lyon Dahl
Presentation at the Justice Conference

29 March 2024

Complex systems science can help us to understand justice in a way that harmonises science and religion. An efficient complex system depends on and dynamically meets the needs of all its components, which might in human terms be a definition of justice. Systems failure can lead to collapse. The information that determines system function can be physical, chemical, genetic, ecological, or at the human level in laws and values.

Globalisation has led to the emergence of environmental justice. There are dimensions of the complex system that is humanity on this planet that can be defined with the tools of science. A just civilization must include a natural environment that promotes human well-being and that supplies the environmental conditions and natural resources for that civilization on a fully sustainable basis. Science can also define the goal for environmental well-being at the local level in our community and with respect to our own lifestyle. The Bahá'í Faith provides a new set of systems values, rules and institutions necessary for our evolution to a global ever-advancing civilisation.

This is the abstract of a paper Arthur Dahl presented at the 2024 Justice Conference at de Poort, The Netherlands, on 29 March 2024. The full paper is available [here](#).

Pathways to Equity in Addressing Climate Change: A Bahá'í Perspective

Article by IEF members Robert S. Sarracino and Margery Dixon,
recently published by [Zygon](#)

According to current scientific consensus, anthropogenic climate change has become one of the most serious existential threats to human civilization. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Bahá'u'lláh warned of the dangers inherent in the unbridled advancement of material civilization if a parallel advance in the moral and spiritual dimensions of civilization were neglected.

This article outlines a framework with three components for dealing with the crisis of anthropogenic climate change. The first component is to embrace justice and equity, rooted in an awareness of the essential oneness and wholeness of the human race. The second is the full embrace of sound science. The third is consultation at all levels of society regarding the technological and social measures to be taken, in which all have a voice and participate in forging solutions.

It then outlines Bahá'í approaches to climate change in light of this framework. It first profiles the worldwide Bahá'í community, then discusses the concept of the three protagonists in the civilization-building process, and finally outlines the framework for action, which characterizes Bahá'í work at the neighborhood and community level.

To read the article, go here: <https://www.zygonjournal.org/article/id/10959/>

The Effects of the Paris Climate Agreement on Global Ecological Cooperation

By IEF Member and Contributor
Uros S. Popadic M.A., research associate (POP and WSDF)

Last month I was happy to attend the Protect our Planet (POP) movement and the World Sustainable Development Forum's (WSDF) conference in New Delhi, where I presented the paper which I share with you below. After the abridged version that you can use to skim the article, there is a link to the full paper. I was inspired by the environmental concern and sincere energy of the people in the POP movement and the WSDF, and of the conference panelists and attendees. The spirit of ecology is truly strong in New Delhi, and their enthusiasm was easy to adopt. I also had the pleasure of visiting the famous Bahá'í Lotus Temple in New Delhi, which is magnificent in its beauty, both spiritual and physical. I hope the article below will be interesting to fellow IEF members.

The Paris Climate agreement was an unprecedented event for global cooperation related to Ecology. It was the catalyst for increased coordination and an inspiration for change. This article attempts to assess the influence of the agreement on the level of global ecological cooperation, and to evaluate the role of the UN in the global promotion of international ecological governance. I will attempt to estimate the effect of the agreement both on the character of future UN climate conferences (referred to as COP) and on the behavior of the signatory governments, in the framework of liberal institutionalism in a globalized world.

The article examines the effect that the Paris Climate agreement in 2015 had on ecological-political cooperation at the global level. Climate cooperation is a positive element of international relations where the various states of the world have a common pressing problem, and have to work together and coordinate to solve it. The article's goal is not only to illuminate what effect the agreement had, but also to analyze the possible effects of such cooperation on the general level of friendship and mutual respect between states. Such landmark agreements improve international relations and decrease tension, creating a solidarity that can spill over into other spheres of diplomatic practice. As there is only one planet, the ecology of which is threatened, all states in the global system share the same main interest of protecting our common environment, and as such this perspective could ease the management of other international problems. The measurement of this effect is done by examining UN Climate Change conferences (including the COP summits) before and after the Paris Agreement, as this is the highest international forum for cooperation and consultation on ecological questions. The article observes the periods before and after 2015, in order to examine the quality and extent of the agreements made, the difference in discourse during the conferences, and the difference in the level of understanding and cooperation before and after the agreement. We take into account the theoretical framework of Conventional Constructivism and Liberal institutionalism, to analyze how climate cooperation shapes the identities and interests of states within the bounds of the world's largest international organization, and how norms related to environmentalism are diffused through international organizations.

After the methodological and theoretical introductions, we divide the article in two main parts. The first is a critical review of available literature regarding international environmental cooperation, especially through the UN. The second is our empirical analysis of the datasets. This is followed by a discussion of the results and a conclusion.

Conclusion:

The Paris Agreement was truly a watershed event in recent history. The UN has proven itself as an effective facilitator of cooperation in the field of ecology, and the world came together in solidarity to coordinate on a problem affecting everyone. As our analysis showed that the agreement significantly improved the level of understanding and cooperation, we argue for an expansion of the agenda of COP summits, and an expansion of the format to regional summits. We found a modest practical increase in carbon emissions, but a decisive increase in solidarity and normative change towards international cooperation. A continuation in this direction is expected also to spill over to other fields of international relations, and improve the overall mood in the international community, and as such the importance of the Paris agreement, Climate change conferences. and COP cannot be overstated.

Links: <https://worldsdf.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/The-Effects-of-the-Paris-Climate-Agreement-on-Global-Ecological-Cooperation-Revised-Version-2.pdf>

at <https://worldsdf.org/research/>

Quotation Relevant to the above Article:

... at a time when nations have difficulty reaching agreement on many important issues, the governments of nearly every country on earth have reached political consensus on a joint framework, in the Paris accord, to respond to climate change in a manner that is anticipated to evolve over time as experience accumulates. More than a century ago, 'Abdu'l-Bahá referred to "unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed." The recently adopted international agreement on climate change, irrespective of any shortcomings and limitations it may have, offers another noteworthy demonstration of that development anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The agreement represents a starting point for constructive thought and action that can be refined or revised on the basis of experience and new findings over time.

The Universal House of Justice, in a letter to individuals, 29 November 2017

Leveraging Education in Emergencies for Climate Action

**Geneva Global Hub
for Education in Emergencies
November 20**

A recent report by the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies, referred to us by IEF member Friedrich Affolter, shows how emergencies that disrupt children's education are being made worse by climate change, and makes recommendations to respond to these interlocked crises. The following excerpt from the foreword of the report summarizes it.

Climate-induced disasters are increasing and frequently compound other crisis drivers, resulting in complex emergencies changing the face of humanitarian response. They come on top of conflict, violence and disasters, and exacerbate existing risks and inequalities, including gender, ethnicity, disability, age and income. They are known to disproportionately impact those already in crisis and vulnerable groups, girls and young women in particular.

Children and youth are most affected by these challenges. Local, national, and international actors must ensure continuous, safe, and quality education, especially at times when a crisis threatens to interrupt it. While education services are increasingly threatened by droughts, floods, heat waves and climate disasters, education itself has never been as crucial as an enabler for adapting to and mitigating climate change.

The report demonstrates the need for new ways of thinking and behavioural change as climate breakdown increases risks to the continuity, safety, and equity of education for children and young people. Furthermore, as extreme temperatures make existing classroom environments increasingly untenable in many regions, greater foresight will be needed when learning spaces are being re-established or rebuilt in the wake of a disaster or crisis.

The report also gives a voice to practitioners, teachers and students, and their concrete ideas for better educational responses to climate change and to climate-induced crises. They know what is needed most and where — in towns, communities, neighbourhoods, and schools impacted by the complex interplay of climate change, emergencies, and protracted crises.

If we want to see a future in which the rights and wellbeing of children and young people living in emergency contexts are protected, both education and climate change interventions must be integrated into humanitarian preparedness and throughout the response.

The report can be downloaded at

<https://eiehub.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Leveraging-EiE-for-Climat...>

Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures

The **Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures network** has just released the final synthesis reports for each country, as well as *Knowledge Co-creation in Action: Learning from the Transforming Education for Sustainable Futures Network. A methodological sourcebook*. The reports are full of creative thinking, wisdom and practical experience about education appropriate to the world views, values and Indigenous knowledge of the marginalised peoples of the world. The reports and many other project outputs are accessible on the TEF Network website at <https://tesf.network/>.

Science, Innovation and Digital Technology

Policy Brief

IEF President Arthur Lyon Dahl and Soon-Young Yoon wrote a background paper for Chapter 3 of the People's Pact for the Future on topics relevant to the IEF community:

Science and Innovation
An Integrated Scientific Advisory Process
Integrating Global Systems Management with Local Justice
Digital Technologies

The entire Policy Brief is available here: https://iefworld.org/PPFscience_brief



Al-Mizan: Covenant for the Earth

Islamic Environmental Charter Launched at UN Environment Assembly Nairobi, 27 February 2024

Under the patronage of H. E. Ms. Leila Benali, the Minister of Energy of Morocco and President of the United Nations Environment Assembly, and other dignitaries, Al-Mizan Covenant for the Earth was launched at the margins of UNEA 6 in Nairobi on 27 February 2024.

The Al-Mizan Covenant for the Earth is an Islamic charter based on concepts rooted in Islamic teachings that emphasize the balance, harmony, and stewardship of the Earth. In Islam, the term "Al-Mizan" refers to balance or justice, and it is often used to describe the equilibrium that should be maintained in all aspects of life, including the relationship between humanity and the environment.

The Al-Mizan Covenant for the Earth calls upon individuals and communities to recognize their responsibility as stewards of the Earth and to act in ways that preserve and protect the natural world. It emphasizes principles such as conservation, sustainable development, and environmental justice, drawing upon Islamic teachings that emphasize the interconnectedness of all creation and the importance of preserving the Earth for future generations.

Al-Mizan - A Covenant for the Earth is a restatement of the principles governing the protection of nature in a form that meets current challenges. It examines the ethics behind the social patterning of human existence and inquires into how they could be brought to life today working in harmony with the heartbeat of the natural world.

Environmentalism is deeply embedded in the veins of Islam. It is about personal behaviour and how it manifests itself in our association with others and also about being considerate in our relationship with the natural world and other sentient beings.

These principles grew out of the foundations established by Prophet Muhammad into a range of rules and institutions that manifested an expression of life that was truly holistic. It was based on the Qur'an and it could be distilled into three categories namely encouraging public good, forbidding wrong action and acting in moderation at all times:

"Let there be a community among you that calls for what is good, urges what is right and forbids what is wrong, they are the ones who have success" (3: 104)

AL-MIZAN ('Balance' in English) is based on Surah Ar-Rahman (The Merciful) in which Allah Almighty describes the creation in its perfect balance:

"The Most Merciful,
Taught the Quran
Created Humankind
Taught him Eloquence
The sun and the moon move in precise calculation
and the stars and the trees prostrate
and the heaven He raised and imposed the balance (Mizan)
That you not transgress within the balance (Mizan)
and establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance (Mizan)"
(Quran 55:1-9)

In essence, the Al-Mizan Covenant for the Earth is a call to action for Muslims and non-Muslims alike to embrace their role as custodians of the Earth and to work towards a more sustainable and equitable future for all beings.

REFERENCE: Othman Llewellyn, Fazlun Khalid and others. *Al-Mizan: Covenant for the Earth*. The Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Birmingham, UK, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-7385385-1-5

The websites where the document can be downloaded in English or Arabic are

<https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/44949>

<https://www.almizan.earth>

English version: https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44949/Al-Mizan_EN...

SOURCE in part: <https://www.unep.org/al-mizan-covenant-earth>

Global Catastrophic Risks Report 2024

**Managing Risks Through Collective Action
Global Challenges Foundation**

<https://globalchallenges.org/updates/anticipating-2024-managing-risk-th...>

The Global Challenges Foundation has released its 2024 Global Catastrophic Risks Report with 12 excellent summary articles by the world's leading experts that cross-link the environment, climate change, the nuclear threat, justice and governance, among other issues. It draws on the most recent thinking of IPCC, IPBES, the Club of Rome, Earth4All and other groups. The essays focus on how the risks of climate change, ecological collapse and weapons of mass destruction intersect and exacerbate one another. For example, resource scarcity driven by climate change can spark social conflict, and rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events threaten the safety of nuclear facilities. Together they provide valuable perspectives on the increasing risks we face and the options available to try to minimise or avoid them.

SOURCE: <https://globalchallenges.org/app/uploads/2024/01/Global-catastrophic-r...>

Equity in action: global to local

David Obura

published in Global Catastrophic Risks 2024
Global Challenges Foundation

Two major updates of the planetary boundaries framework were published in the last few months.¹ They reinforce what is now commonly seen in public media from local to global levels – that humanity is crossing an increasing number of limits of our single earth system. We are accelerating, rather than decelerating, into the Anthropocene. A key advance is that one of these updates expanded on the justice dimensions of crossing planetary limits. This is a critically important advance as it addresses the fears of many developing countries and disadvantaged groups of what should be done and by whom, in returning within planetary limits.

Three elements of planetary (in)justice have been clear for many years, sharpened by climate change. First and most obviously, some parts of the global (and national) populations are far more vulnerable to climate impacts. This is amplified by two further injustices: the same people have contributed least to the drivers of climate change, and in the process, their fair share of the global carbon budget has been appropriated by others, thereby limiting their available pathways to development.

The new work lays out two further injustices.² While the study reinforces the identification of 1.5°C as a ‘safe limit’ for warming,³ given the demonstrated vulnerability of millions of people to climate-related hazards already, and of some countries to inevitable drowning by sea level rise from historic emissions, that a ‘just’ limit has already been crossed in the last decade, with unjust exposure of hundreds of millions of people already at 1°C warming.

The second new dimension is that certain of the planetary boundaries are actually expressed at local levels, not global. For example, one aspect of the biosphere boundary, the provisioning of ecosystem services – such as pollination by insects, or protection of soils from erosion by overlying vegetation – operates locally, down to scales of 1 km or less. And because of this localization, they must be active at the scale of individual people, for those people to have just access and be able to benefit from them.

This article then continues with addressing the question:

Why is this important to mitigate and address global risk equitably?

To keep reading, go here: <https://iefworld.org/dObura24.html>

However, we don’t want to deprive the busy reader of a key paragraph later in the article:

In thinking about what this means for addressing Anthropocentric threats it is important to focus on local assets and ‘nature based solutions’, to build from the ground up:

- equity must drive decision-making as it is the foundational criterion that can identify fair direction of resource flows, and to turn nature- negative activities to nature- and people-positive ones. A simple heuristic is to identify the places and contexts where there is a justice deficit in any of the five dimensions indicated, to redirect resources to redress these;
- focus on natural assets as the foundations of resilience and welfare in all local spaces, down to 1 km² scales. It is only by building up these natural assets will we be able to secure peoples’ resilience to multiple, and often surprising, future hazards.

2023 Hottest Year on Record

Comments on WMO
Report in *The Guardian*
19 March 2024

The world has never been closer to breaching the 1.5C (2.7F) global heating limit, even if only temporarily. The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed that 2023 was the hottest year on record by a clear margin. It found that records were “once again broken, and in some cases smashed” for key indicators such as greenhouse gas pollution, surface temperatures, ocean heat and acidification, sea level rise, Antarctic sea ice cover and glacier retreat.

Andrea Celeste Saulo, Secretary-General of the WMO, said the organisation was now “sounding the red alert to the world”.

The report found temperatures near the surface of the earth were 1.45C higher last year than they were in the late 1800s, when people began to destroy nature at an industrial scale and burn large amounts of coal, oil and gas. The error margin of 0.12C in the temperature estimate is large enough that the earth may have already heated 1.5C. But this would not mean world leaders have broken the promise they made in Paris in 2015 to halt global heating to that level by the end of the century, scientists warn, because they measure global heating using a 30-year average rather than counting a spike in a single year.

The report documented violent weather extremes – particularly heat – on every inhabited continent. Some of the weather events were made stronger or more likely by climate change, rapid attribution studies have shown. If we do not stop burning fossil fuels, the climate will continue to warm, making life more dangerous, more unpredictable, and more expensive for billions of people on earth.

Climate scientists are divided on whether extreme temperatures seen at the start of 2024 represent an unexpected acceleration of the climate crisis. Some indicators, such as sea surface temperatures, have been unexpectedly high – even accounting for the return of the ocean-warming weather pattern El Niño – while other weather events have reached rare extremes sooner than thought.

The WMO found “a glimmer of hope” in the growth of renewable energy. The amount of renewable capacity added in 2023 was almost 50% greater than the year before, the report found, bringing it to the highest rate observed in the past two decades.

Simon Lewis, professor of global change science at University College London, said the state of the climate is an “accelerating crisis” for humanity. “This is, sadly, only the beginning of much worse impacts to come, given carbon emissions are still rising and there is continued massive new investment in extracting fossil fuels.”

The report found that marine heatwaves seared one third of the world’s ocean on an average day in 2023, harming vital ecosystems and food systems. By the end of the year, just 10% of the ocean had escaped heatwave conditions.

Climate change also worsened extreme weather events that left people hungry and forced them from their homes, even if it was not the main factor in their suffering. The number of people who are “acutely” food insecure has more than doubled since 2019 to 333 million people in 2023, the report found, concentrated in Africa and south Asia.

SOURCE: based on article by Ajit Niranjana in *The Guardian*, 19 March 2024
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/mar/19/red-alert-last-year...>

Items of Interest

Digital Sustainability Toolbox

Individual actions can have a positive collective effect. Sustainability in the Digital Age has created a toolbox of resources to help people become more sustainable in the digital age. It's presented in an easy-to-read format and gives practical advice on how to reduce your digital footprint.

Go here to access the toolbox:

<https://sustainabilitydigitalage.org/featured/digital-sustainability-toolbox/>

SOURCE: futureearth

<https://mailchi.mp/futureearth/march-2024-newsletter?e=6867365957>