



**LEAVES, A Newsletter of the
INTERNATIONAL
ENVIRONMENT FORUM
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International Environment Forum A Baha'i inspired organization addressing
the environment and sustainable development

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General Secretary Emily Firth
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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 climate change action. 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.

RIO+20 and IEF 16th Annual Conference and General Assembly

This year's 16th IEF Annual Conference will consist of the activities which we co-sponsor and in which we participate at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and associated Peoples' Summit and other events in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 11 to 23 June 2012. We cannot yet give a full programme as the organizers have not yet advised us which of our proposed activities have been accepted. A notice will be sent to all members by early June with the details as then available, including information on participation over the internet or by email. The IEF Annual General Assembly and election of the governing board will also be held in Rio in mid-June at a date and location still to be finalized. The election call and Annual Report will be sent to all members with the conference information. This is an unusually short year, as the last conference was later than usual in December, and this one is earlier than usual in June because of the UN event to which IEF is accredited.

There will be delegations to the Rio+20 Conference from the Baha'i International Community, several national Baha'i communities including strong representation from Brazil, and the European Baha'i Business Forum as well as IEF. IEF and EBBF expect to have a joint booth if this can be arranged. At least 9 IEF members are planning to attend the conference in various delegations.

Three IEF members will be giving papers at the Global Research Forum on Sustainable Consumption and Production in Rio on 13-15 June. IEF members will also participate in the Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development organized by the International Council for Science, as well as the intergovernmental conference.

All IEF members are encouraged to contribute over the internet to the Rio+20 Dialogues on Sustainable Development. See the invitation below.

Invitation to join and contribute to Rio+20 Dialogues on Sustainable Development

The Government of Brazil is convening a Dialogue series with the aim of bringing together civil society, the scientific community and academia to contribute ideas and suggestions on sustainable development. Conclusions and recommendations from the Dialogues will be conveyed directly to the heads of State and Government gathering for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development taking place in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil on June 20-22.

These Dialogues have already begun online, and you are invited to join the Dialogues now and share your innovative recommendations for sustainable solutions that will be considered during the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Conference.

How to join the dialogues: Go to <http://www.riodialogues.org> and enter your email address through the Request Invite feature. You will then receive an email with a link, with which you can sign in and join a Dialogue topic to participate in a discussion on sustainable development. Contact support@riodialogues.org if you have any difficulty registering, or if you wish to have an entire organization, institution or network invited.

We invite you to join the dialogues and to circulate this message widely within your personal and professional networks so that colleagues and friends have an opportunity to share their unique perspectives and creative recommendations on achieving sustainable development.

With many thanks from the Rio+20 Dialogues Team

130 World Leaders Confirmed: Last Sprint towards Rio+20

Over 130 Heads of State, Vice Presidents, Heads of Government, and deputy Prime Ministers are currently inscribed on the speakers list for the Rio+20 Conference, from 20-22 June. Rio+20 is expected to be a tremendous example of wide-ranging popular participation: over 50,000 people are expected to attend the Conference and numerous side events in Rio de Janeiro, including thousands of business CEOs, parliamentarians, mayors, NGO leaders, academics, senior UN officials, representatives from miscellaneous groups and journalists.

As the world engages in the last sprint towards the Rio+20, time is ticking for the negotiations of the Conference's Outcome document that will resume from 23 April to 4 May in UN Headquarters in New York. The 19-page "zero draft" issued in January was condensed from 6,000 pages of submissions from member states and other stakeholders. A large number of proposals were made by governments during intense negotiations in March. The draft was then significantly expanded, including with suggested alternate language by the Co-Chairs, bringing the text to some 270 pages. The revised draft identified 26 critical areas for action, including: water, energy, food, jobs, cities, oceans, disaster preparedness, poverty eradication, tourism, transport, climate change, sustainable consumption and production, lands, chemicals and forests, among others.

Objective & Themes: The objective of the Conference is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

The Conference will focus on two themes: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and (b) the institutional framework for sustainable development.

United States Interfaith Moral Action on Climate (IMAC) Gives Congress an F on Climate

On April 24 Interfaith Moral Action on Climate--a national coalition of faith and spiritual organizations that includes the National Climate Ethics Campaign and believes climate change is the most important moral issue of our time--released a report card evaluating the response of Congress to the climate emergency. IMAC gave Congress a big Red F for Failure on the gravest moral issue facing humanity today and made it clear that all of humanity desperately needs Congress to get an A+ on this serious issue.

IMAC also evaluated every member of Congress on three questions:

1. Does the member openly acknowledge that climate change is real, human caused, and a serious problem
2. Does the member talk about climate change in their ongoing duties
3. Does the member vote right on climate based on the LCV assessment for 2011 (thanks to LVC for their permission and help)

A Moral Challenge: Moving From F to A+ on Climate Change

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-adriance/interfaith-action-moving-from-f-to-a-on-climate-change_b_1472176.html

By Peter Adriance, Representative for Sustainable Development, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the U.S

The Islamic call to prayer resonated from the balcony of the historic New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, once regularly attended by Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C. The cry of "Allah-u-Akbar" proclaimed the greatness of God. The piercing blast of the Jewish shofar -- a ram's horn blown with both reverence and conviction -- affirmed the sacredness of the gathering.

For me, as well as others, it was a stirring and fitting beginning to an extraordinarily diverse multifaith worship service with a common theme: the healing of the climate. By the time the service ended Bahá'í, Baptist, Buddhist, Catholic, Evangelical, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim traditions had contributed readings, reflections and prayers supporting that mission. Indigenous tribal leaders had further graced the ceremonies.

The service was part of a day of religious activities organized by Interfaith Moral Action on Climate Change, a collaborative initiative of religious and faith-based leaders, groups and individuals of goodwill who are compelled to lead the call for urgent action to address the deepening climate emergency as a moral imperative. The day began with a vigil at the Martin Luther King Jr. memorial and ended with visits of multifaith delegations to members of Congress.

Why were so many religions weighing in on this issue? How can religion help to address an issue like climate change? In my experience as a Bahá'í representative, I've had several discussions with scientists on this matter. It is well known that for most of us, facts and numbers, even combined with dire warnings about the future, fail to motivate. The scientists I know are good at presenting the facts, but even they admit that they aren't so adept at moving people to take effective action. Religion has the power to motivate people for all the right reasons. It is able to mine the depths of human motivation, discern truth and speak directly to conscience. Through religion, matters of justice, equity, and fair-mindedness are elevated in priority.

After the multifaith worship service, the diverse gathering walked toward the Capitol holding banners proclaiming three simple but powerful messages: "Climate Change is a Moral Issue," "Inaction is Immoral" and "All Faiths Care for Creation." This was not a typical procession of environmentalists. Colorful cloth banners

displayed the symbols of every faith. A universal cry, voiced by all the world's religions, for taking action on moral grounds has the potential to be a game changer. It is a cry that Congress needs to hear.

Despite sincere efforts by some in Congress, that body as a whole has failed meaningfully to act on climate change. Given that failure, the group presented Congress an "F" report card during a press conference that afternoon and during the one-on-one meetings later in the day.

But the point was not so much to condemn the inaction but to urge Congress to work rapidly to raise its grade from F to A+. It can do this by enacting policies that dramatically reduce wasted energy, significantly shift our power supplies to renewable energy sources, eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and assist the vulnerable here and abroad to adapt to climate changes already underway.

Such practical steps are based on science and backed by religion. The world watches and waits. Will Congress heed the call?

For more on the Interfaith Moral Action on Climate Change, see <http://www.interfaithactiononclimatechange.org/>.



Secretary-General

SG/SM/14204

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Secretary-General, in Message to Meeting on ‘Happiness and Well-being’ Calls for ‘Rio+20’ Outcome that Measures More than Gross National Income

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s remarks at the High-level Meeting on “Happiness and Well-being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm”, in New York on 2 April:

I commend the Government of Bhutan for initiating this important debate on the link between happiness, well-being and prosperity.

Earlier this year, I received the final report of my Global Sustainability Panel. Among its 56 recommendations was the importance of establishing a Sustainable Development Index, or a set of indicators to measure progress towards sustainable development. The Panel noted that, while material prosperity is important, it is far from being the only determinant of well-being.

Such thinking dates back to the earliest times. It can be found, for example, in the teachings of the Buddha and Aristotle. More recently, measuring success by wealth alone has been questioned in the groundbreaking Brundtland Report of 1987, the Human Development Index and the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, established by President [Nicolas] Sarkozy of France.

Bhutan has recognized the supremacy of national happiness over national income since the early 1970s. It has famously adopted the goal of gross national happiness over gross national product (GNP). Such thinking is now gaining ground in other regions.

Costa Rica is well-known for being the greenest country in the world — an example of holistic and environmentally responsible development. Compared to other countries with similar income levels, it ranks higher in human development and is a beacon of peace and democracy. In the United Kingdom, statistical authorities are experimenting with “National Well-being”. The European Commission has its “GDP and Beyond” project. And the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has its guidelines of measurement of well-being.

GNP has long been the yardstick by which economies and politicians have been measured. Yet it fails to take into account the social and environmental costs of so-called progress. We need a new economic paradigm that recognizes the parity between the three pillars of sustainable development. Social, economic and environmental well-being are indivisible. Together they define gross global happiness.

There are now fewer than 75 days to the “Rio+20” Conference on Sustainable Development. Sustainable development is one of the top priorities for my second term. The world stands at a crossroads. We need everyone — Government Ministers and policymakers, business and civil society leaders, and young people — to work together to transform our economies, to place our societies on a more just and equitable footing, and to protect the resources and ecosystems on which our shared future depends.

Connecting the dots between these issues — between water, food and energy security, climate change, urbanization, poverty, inequality and the empowerment of the world’s women — lies at the heart of sustainable development. But, it will take resolute will from all sectors of society. Sustainable development recognizes that our economic, social and environmental objectives are not competing goals that must be traded off against each other, but are interconnected objectives that are most effectively pursued together in a holistic manner.

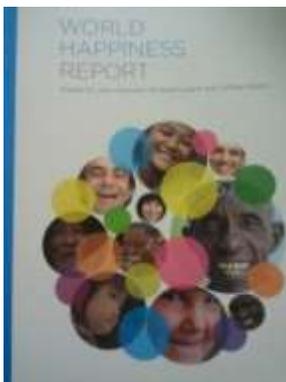
We need an outcome from Rio+20 that reflects this. An outcome that says that happiness and well-being are measured in more than gross national income — and that they are fundamental goals in themselves.

I thank the Government of Bhutan, and the Prime Minister, for convening this meeting, and I wish you a most productive debate.



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A new development paradigm

A small country, a bold leader, a radical approach and impressive support – all this characterized the launching of a holistic development path that seeks to integrate sustainable and equitable socio-economic development with environmental conservation, cultural promotion, and good governance. This launch took place at the United Nations on April 2, 2012 and was led by the Prime Minister of Bhutan. The launch focused on redefining the mechanisms used to determine growth and prosperity. Rather than continuing to use the GDP (Gross National Product) model which measures profit in purely monetary terms, other models which put human development in the center were proposed. Experience from the “Beyond GDP Project” and the use during

the last decade of the Human Development Index and the Gross Happiness Index formed the basis for the proposals.

When describing the importance of happiness and wellbeing in the new paradigm, the Prime Minister of Bhutan explained: “This concept of “happiness” has nothing to do with the common use of that word to denote an ephemeral, passing mood — happy today or unhappy tomorrow due to some temporary external condition like praise or blame, gain or loss. Rather, it refers to the deep, abiding happiness that comes from living life in full harmony with the natural world, with our communities, and with our culture and spiritual heritage, and from knowing and trusting that our leaders care for the common good — in short from feeling totally connected with our world.

And yet our modern world, and particularly its economic system, promotes precisely the reverse — a profound sense of alienation from the natural world and from each other. Cherishing self-interest and material gain, we destroy nature, degrade our natural and cultural heritage, disrespect indigenous knowledge, overwork, get stressed out, and no longer have time to enjoy each other’s company, let alone to contemplate and meditate on life’s deeper meaning. Myriad scholarly studies now show that massive gains in GDP and income have not made us happier. On the contrary, respected economists have demonstrated empirically that deep social networks are a far better predictor of satisfaction and wellbeing than income and material gain.

“An economic system is (needed) that is no longer based on the dangerous illusions that limitless growth is possible on our precious and finite planet or that endless material gain promotes wellbeing. Instead, it will be a system that promotes harmony and respect for nature and for each other, that respects our ancient wisdom traditions and protects our most vulnerable people as our own family, and that gives us time to live and enjoy our lives and to appreciate rather than destroy our world. It will be an economic system, in short, that is fully sustainable and that is rooted in true, abiding happiness and wellbeing.

Sustainability is the essential basis and pre-condition of such a sane economic system. But an economy exists not for mere survival but to provide the enabling conditions for human happiness and the wellbeing of all life forms. The new economy will be an economy based on a genuine vision of life’s ultimate meaning and purpose — an economy that does not cut us off from nature and community but fosters true human potential, fulfillment, and satisfaction. “

Invitation to Global Ethics Forum, Geneva, 28-30 June 2012

The invitation below has been extended to members and friends of the International Environment Forum, through our partnership with the Global Ethics Forum.

The Global Ethics Forum project organized by Globethics.net aims at providing a platform for dialogue and leadership as well as for action to the private sector and to all stakeholders on issues related to ethics and sustainable development in all sectors worldwide.

Following the Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, the Global Ethics Forum 2012 will focus on the value of values as seeds for ethical transformation in politics, business, and society towards a sustainable future. The updated programme of the Forum is available on the Globethics.net site at <http://www.globethics.net/web/gef/programme1>.

Seeds for Successful Transformation 2012: The Value of Values in Responsible Business
Register now for the Global Ethics Forum <http://www.globethics.net/web/gef/registration-form>