



**LEAVES, A Newsletter of the
INTERNATIONAL
ENVIRONMENT FORUM**

Volume 14, Number 9 15 October 2012



International Environment Forum A Baha'i inspired organization addressing
the environment and sustainable development

Website	www.iefworld.org	Article Deadline next issue 13 November 2012
Article submission	newsletter@iefworld.org	
Secretariat Email	ief@iefworld.org	General Secretary Emily Firth
President Email	ief@iefworld.org	Arthur Lyon Dahl Ph.D.
Postal address	12B Chemin de Maisonneuve, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland	

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.

Upcoming IEF Annual Conference in Europe

The Governing Board of the European Baha'i Business Forum (www.ebbf.org) has agreed to the proposal of the IEF board to hold another joint annual conference in Europe in 2013, The precise date and location are still to be determined, but it will be in late September or early October, possibly in the Netherlands. This will be another opportunity for IEF and its sister Baha'i-inspired organization to explore how business can respond to the sustainability challenges in a rapidly changing world. The last joint IEF/ebbf conference was in 2008. This year's ebbf conference was just held in Ericeira, Portugal, near Lisbon, on the topic "Redefining the Enterprise" (<http://www.makeitmeaningful.org/>). Arthur Dahl gave the closing keynote on "Critical decade for the transition to sustainability: crises and opportunities for redefining the enterprise." The presentation can be downloaded through the conference web site from evernote.

Sustainable Development Goals

The UN General Assembly is holding a special event on 16 October to discuss how to develop the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed at the Rio+20 Conference. There will then be an intergovernmental Open Working Group to take the discussions forward. To launch the discussion on SDGs on the Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, the secretariat invited comments on three main questions via Facebook or twitter. These are given below together with the responses of IEF president Arthur Dahl.

1) How can the SDGs build on the MDGs and integrate sustainable development into the post-2015 development framework?

The SDGs should address the full spectrum from poverty to excessive wealth, lack of necessities to over-consumption, both of which are destabilizing to society. There should be goals and indicators for managing all of the wealth of the planet (economic, social and natural capital) and its equitable distribution, including both capital accounts (stocks) and flows in space and in time.

2) How can the SDGs integrate the three pillars of sustainable development?

There should be equal weight given to economic, social and environmental goals, as well as a systems framework to identify inter-relationships. For example, employment is both economic and social, resource exploitation both economic and environmental, and biodiversity conservation both environmental and social. Goals linked to planetary boundaries will also integrate across the pillars.

3) How to develop universally applicable goals that at the same time take into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development?

The real goal of development should not be economic or monetary indicators but the fulfillment of individual human potential, including through education, work, having a place in the community and society, and cultural, artistic and spiritual achievement (inspired by recent measures of happiness). Each country should define its own culturally-appropriate definitions of fulfillment, and then use universal indicators of the distance to their targets, broken down by different segments of the population (urban/rural, youth/working adults/elderly, immigrants and minorities). With the large disparities between countries, there should also be goals for wealth redistribution, special assistance or compensatory measures (as in the EU).

Cloud Conference on Baha'i Studies

An international Cloud Conference on Scholarship and the Arts was held over the internet on 13 October on the topic: 'Abdu'l-Baha, Legacies and Resonances'. The conference alternated scholarly and artistic presentations. Arthur Dahl gave a presentation on "Abdu'l-Baha and Sustainability" which can be downloaded from the IEF web site at http://iefworld.org/fl/AbdulBaha_sustainability.pdf.

New Website: UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform

The United Nations has created a new web site as its **Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform**: <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.html>. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) website includes resources describing inter-governmental processes, the UN system and major groups as well as resources on

sustainable development in action.

The website includes multiple resources related to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20). The "Rio+20 Follow-up" section describes the Rio+20 outcome document, "The Future We Want," and outlines current processes to develop sustainable development goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in coordination with the post-2015 development agenda process.

The Topics section includes links to thematic areas and cross-sectoral issues highlighted in the Rio+20 outcome document. It also contains links to additional topics related to Agenda 21 and the Commission for Sustainable Development.

The Resources page features selected publications and provides links to nearly 6,000 reports, background papers, issue briefs, special series and other documents on sustainable development. Users can search for documents in a documents library or browse from a list of major agreements and conventions related to sustainable development.

The Power of Interfaith Collaboration: Linking Energy Conservation and Faith Communities

IEF board member Peter Adriance, who is the Representative for Sustainable Development of the Baha'is of the United States, has just had another piece published in the Huffington Post on **The Power of Interfaith Collaboration: Linking Energy Conservation and Faith Communities**.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-adriance/power-of-interfaith-collaboration-linking-energy-conservation-and-faith-communities_b_1898521.html

Posted: 09/25/2012 11:56 am

Looking out over the audience, I saw that the room was filled with every seat taken and a number of participants standing along the edges. It was a gathering sponsored by the White House office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, attended by more than 150 representatives of widely diverse faith groups and congregations from across the country. Their common interest? Energy savings. A dollar saved through energy conservation is a dollar that can be redirected toward more worthwhile ends -- of which the various faiths have many.

I was there, not only as an interested representative of the Bahá'ís of the United States, but also to lead off the day with a short reflection on the power of interfaith collaboration. I could see evidence of it in the room just by glancing around -- colleagues from Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu and Bahá'í traditions were there, along with several representatives of important interfaith initiatives, such as Interfaith Power and Light, which is now in 39 states. So, perhaps my task was to "preach to the choir"!

Just a few years ago, this kind of gathering would not have taken place. The upsurge in interest in energy savings has not only been driven by a slow economy and scarce resources, but also an awareness of the reality of climate change and its moral implications. This latter issue gave the meeting an even greater sense of urgency for all in the room.

The ravages of climate change, brought on by the accumulation of greenhouse gas emissions, were brought into stark relief this summer for many here in the U.S. and around the world. The list of symptoms is all too familiar: record-breaking drought, flooding, wildfires, extreme weather events, melting of the Arctic icecap. If we didn't feel these events directly we witnessed others facing these harsh realities. Such episodes are causing major disruptions to the lives and health of countless people and species around the globe.

So, even more than having an interest in energy conservation, those of us in the room were there with a common concern for justice. All faiths hold justice as a strong value. For me, a short passage from the Bahá'í Writings comes to mind:

O Son of Spirit! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom ... Ponder this in thy heart; how it behoveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes. (Baha'u'llah, Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 36)

By setting justice before our eyes, our energy conservation efforts take on an even greater purpose. The diverse faiths perceive climate change not only as a technical issue but also a moral one. The demand for justice on this issue is loud and clear. How can we, as U.S.-based faith groups, proclaim principles of stewardship and justice and at the same time produce per capita greenhouse gas emissions well beyond our

fair share -- especially knowing the impact they will have on the many who contributed little to the problem and are less able than we are to adapt to the resulting changes? The golden rule, common to all faiths, points to the hypocrisy in such an approach.

When several faith groups made visits to Congress last spring under the auspices of Interfaith Moral Action on Climate, the power of diverse faiths speaking with one voice on this issue became clear for me. The diversity of our delegations felt good and right. Such unified action, when it reaches a critical mass will be a game changer. It will show the power of interfaith collaboration.

The Environmental Protection Agency's EnergyStar for Congregations program offers an online tool for free, called "Portfolio Manager," that congregations can use to track energy consumption in their places of worship and compare it to energy used in other similar facilities.

Buildings in the U.S. account for 17 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. There are 370,000 worship facilities in the country, most rather large buildings with some unique characteristics. If all of these were to cut just 20 percent off their energy bills, according to EPA, they would save nearly \$630 million and prevent more than 2.6 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions in the process. Typically, houses of worship that use Portfolio Manager have been cutting their energy use by 30 percent or more. During the meeting we heard from several who had successfully achieved this.

EPA has issued a three-part "Call to Action" to congregations across the country wanting to conserve energy: 1) start by benchmarking your facility's energy use; 2) take steps that result in cutting your facility's emissions by at least 20 percent; and 3) strive to qualify as an "EnergyStar Congregation" by earning at least 75 points on a scale of 100, set out by EPA. To date, 28 congregations have qualified for the latter distinction, and they were celebrated at the White House event. Obviously, there's plenty of room for more congregations to get on board.

If your congregation is among those working to reduce its energy consumption, bravo! If not, perhaps it is time to get in touch with EPA. Taking such steps on your own can make a difference. By acting collectively we can do so much more. That's the power of interfaith collaboration!



Paper by IEF members on Sustainable Energy Governance

Three IEF members, Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Nigel Jolands and Lawrence Staudt, have just published their paper "**Global governance for sustainable energy: The contribution of a global public goods approach**" in the journal *Ecological Economics*, volume 83, pages 11-18, November 2012. The abstract is available on line at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0921800912003254>, where the full article can be purchased, or send a request to one of the authors. The IEF is mentioned in the acknowledgments as the origin of their collaboration.

Summary Outcomes of Rio+20

For an excellent summary of the outcomes of Rio+20 (the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012), see the article by Maria Ivanova "The Contested Legacy of Rio+20" at <http://uncsd.iisd.org/guest-articles/the-contested-legacy-of-rio20/>.

The Contested Legacy of Rio+20

<http://uncsd.iisd.org/guest-articles/the-contested-legacy-of-rio20/>.

posted on: Thursday, September 20th, 2012

by: Maria Ivanova, Assistant Professor of Global Governance and Co-Director, Center for Governance and Sustainability, University of Massachusetts Boston

In June 2012, nearly fifty thousand people gathered in Rio de Janeiro for the latest and largest environmental summit, Rio+20.[1] Long before the conference started, however, observers were predicting its failure. "Designed with a wide range of objectives, the conference seems destined to fail," noted Michel Rocard, former Prime Minister of France. "Without consensus, no action can be taken, and consensus will be impossible." [2]

Activists and analysts quickly pronounced the conference a disappointment,[3] a "colossal failure of leadership and vision,"[4] and evidence that "governments have given up on the planet." [5] Many criticized the 50-page outcome document, entitled *The Future We Want*, as weak and lacking vision. Greenpeace even dubbed it "the longest suicide note in history." [6] These grim assessments stem from the unmet expectations for a bold, ambitious collective global vision or treaty to solve increasingly severe contemporary environmental problems.

My assessment of Rio+20 is more nuanced and optimistic than the conclusions of many observers, and is grounded in three observations. First, global problems have increased in number and complexity, their interconnectedness requiring collective action at multiple scales. There is no single, overarching solution to environmental, economic or social problems and much less to all of them collectively. Second, achieving global consensus on global issues is markedly more difficult today, as most traditional and emerging powers are preoccupied with a multitude of domestic or regional problems. Third, this new environment does not encourage big, bold political visionaries but rather requires adaptive leaders attuned to specific details and changing circumstances. Against this backdrop, one could read the ambiguous waffling of "The Future We Want" as a meaningless potpourri of issues and actors – or as the license to operate more freely for a number of institutions at multiple levels of governance.

Despite significant political constraints and predictions of imminent failure, Rio+20 set the agenda for the next two decades for global environmental and sustainability governance through five major developments: a shift in the narrative of sustainable development; reform of international institutions; rethinking of resources; launch of the sustainable development goals process; and integration of participation as principle and practice.

Narrative

Over four decades, the global narrative has shifted from a focus on protection of the environment as a precondition to development, to a focus on development as a precondition for environmental protection. In 1972, governments agreed that "the protection and improvement of the human environment is a major issue which affects the well-being of peoples and economic development throughout the world; it is the urgent desire of the peoples of the whole world and the duty of all Governments." [7] At Rio+20, governments saw "eradicating poverty [as] the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development." [8] An important, yet largely unnoticed shift that Rio+20 brought about is the substitution of the three "pillars" with the three "dimensions" of sustainable development. This change recognizes the fluidity and interconnectedness of the environmental, economic, and social aspects of global issues rather than their parallel existence and opens up opportunities for integrative work at multiple levels of governance

Institutions

Rio+20's institutional legacy is threefold. First, it enabled the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) to take a leading role in the post-Rio world. Governments committed to "strengthen and upgrade" UNEP by expanding its Governing Council from 58 countries to universal membership; increasing its financial resources; and expanding its role in capacity-building and implementation. UNEP also received authority to formulate UN system-wide strategies on the environment. Second, in a rare institutional reform move, governments decided to abolish the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) – the central institutional outcome of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit – and replace it with a High-Level Forum. Finally, Rio+20's institutional impact on the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) went most unnoticed but might be most significant. By adding "environmental and related fields" to ECOSOC's functions, governments widely expanded its mandate, de facto re-writing the UN Charter on ECOSOC.[9]

Resources

The provision of financial resources to support the implementation of commitments has been a core negotiation issue during all Earth Summits. Rio+20 negotiations were tainted by unmet promises, yet colored by a renewed optimism that a combination of state and non-state contributions would provide the resources necessary to fulfill them. Governments committed to assess financing needs, evaluate the effectiveness of existing financing instruments, and outline a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy by 2014. In addition, non-government sources pledged over US\$513 billion to support their commitments. Without a system for tracking pledges, resources, and outcomes, however, the additive effect of these multiple initiatives is likely to be limited.

Sustainable Development Goals

Most observers agree that one of the most important achievements of Rio+20 was the agreement on a process to set global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will focus on priority areas for sustainable development and cover both developed and developing countries.

Participation

Rio+20 both called for and evidenced greatly increased global engagement in environmental governance. The outcome document reflected a new global norm for participation – from the "full and effective participation of all countries in decision making processes" to enhancing the participation and "effective engagement" of civil society in multiple governance aspects.[10]

Mega-conferences have been criticized as wasteful talk-shops[11] and lauded as the causal mechanisms behind aggregate shifts in international politics.[12] Rio+20 looks to have proven both right. Under the banner of sustainable development, Rio+20 could not zero in on a handful of issues; it had to tackle all and could not produce the far-reaching reforms many deemed necessary. Significant progress, however, happened on the sidelines of Rio+20 as governments, businesses, civil society groups, and universities registered over 600 voluntary commitments and mobilized over US\$513 billion to meet them. Most importantly, however, Rio+20 mobilized the young generation and its lasting legacy might be the training of these adaptive and perceptive new leaders attuned to local realities, globally.

[1] This article is based on a larger piece by the author, which is currently under review at *Global Environmental Politics*.

[2] Rocard, Michael. "Don't Blame it on Rio." February 22 2012.

[3] Halle, Mark. 2012. *Perspectives on Rio+20: When the Best Options are Unavailable: What Space do we Really Have*.

[4] Center for American Progress. *Issues: How the Rio+20 Earth Summit Could Have Been Better*. June 26 2012

[5] Monbiot, George. "After Rio, We Know. Governments Have Given up on the Planet." *The Guardian*, June 25 2012.

[6] Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace International, quoted in *Time Magazine*, June 26, 2012, Time Science.

[7] UN General Assembly. 1972. Declaration of the UN Conference on the Human Environment (A/CONF.48/14). Stockholm. 10 January. para 2.

[8] UN General Assembly. 2012. Resolution A/66/L.56: *The Future We Want*. 27 July 2012. para 2.

[9] UN General Assembly. 2012. Resolution A/66/L.56: *The Future We Want*. 27 July 2012., para 83.

[10] UN General Assembly. 2012. Resolution A/66/L.56: *The Future We Want*. 27 July 2012., para 76(e), 76(h).

[11] Fomerand, Jacques. 1996. "UN Conferences: Media Events or Genuine Diplomacy?" *Global Governance* 2 (3): 361-75.

[12] Haas, Peter. 2002. "UN Conferences and Constructivist Governance of the Environment." *Global Governance* 8 (1): p.74.



Second international meeting of the Green Pilgrimage Network announced for 2013

Following on from the inaugural celebrations in Assisi, Italy in 2011 dates have now been announced for the second official international meeting of the Green Pilgrimage Network (GPN) which will take place in the holy city of Trondheim, Norway in July 2013.

The meeting will be attended by representatives of the twelve pilgrimage sites currently making up the GPN as well as staff from partner agencies and will review progress on implementing the action plans presented in Assisi.

Jointly organised by The Municipality of the City of Trondheim, the Diocese of Nidaros, The Church of Norway and The Alliance of Religions and Conservation the event will take place from July 25 to July 29, 2013 and will coincide with the annual St Olav festival which is Northern Europe's largest pilgrimage event.

The diocese of Nidaros, Trondheim is one of nine cities and 22 different organisations and faiths that joined as founding members of the Green Pilgrimage Network, launched at Assisi, Italy, during ARC's Sacred Land Celebration, October 31-Nov 2, 2011. The founder members from Trondheim are:

- Nidaros Diocese of the Lutheran Church of Norway
- The City of Trondheim
- The National Pilgrimage Centre, Norway

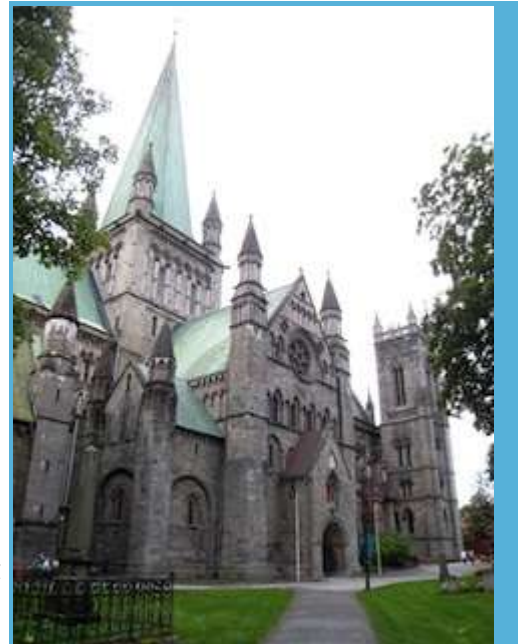
The City of Trondheim in Norway was the most northern pilgrimage site for medieval Christians. The patron saint of Norway, King Olav Haraldson, who brought Christianity to Norway, was buried here in 1030. He was declared a saint shortly afterwards, and pilgrimages to his shrine started at once.

Since 2008, the Municipality of Trondheim has been taking part in a national government energy and climate programme called "Cities of the Future". The Green Pilgrimage Cities initiative in Trondheim will now become part of that Cities of the Future programme.

Green Pilgrimage Actions

The Municipality and the Church of Norway have signed a charter committing themselves to caring for and accommodating pilgrims in an environmentally friendly way:

- They pledge to make their newly opened National Pilgrimage Centre a model of conservation practice
- to promote the use of environmental award certificates for local restaurants and hotels, as well as for church buildings
- to draw up an ecological map for Trondheim
- to provide clean drinking water for all pilgrims



The shrine of St Olav in Nidaros Cathedral, Trondheim, is one of Europe's major pilgrimage destinations.