



**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
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.

Human Rights and Climate Change

IEF was represented on 10 September at an interactive consultation on human rights and climate change at the Palais des Nations in Geneva during the 27th session of the UN Human Rights Council. The consultation was organized by the Geneva Interfaith Forum on Climate Change and Human Rights, in which IEF is a partner, in preparation for a full day discussion on human rights and climate change in the Council mandated by HRC Resolution A/HRC/26/L.33/Rev.1, to be held at the 28th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council in March 2015.

IEF 19th Conference in Paris 10-11 March 2015

The **19th Annual Conference of the International Environment Forum (IEF)** will be held in association with the international conference of the **Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL)** at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, on 10-11 March 2015. The theme of the PERL International Conference is **“A Decade of Responsible Living: Preparing, Engaging, Responding and Learning”**.

The IEF will be organizing a panel on ethical transformation and education for service at the individual, community and institutional levels, and contributing to a workshop on values-based indicators in education and the toolkits that IEF has contributed to developing.

Please note that members wishing to present a paper at the conference are invited to submit an abstract to the PERL secretariat **by 17 September 2014**, which is also the deadline for early registration, also on the PERL website: <http://www.perlprojects.org>.

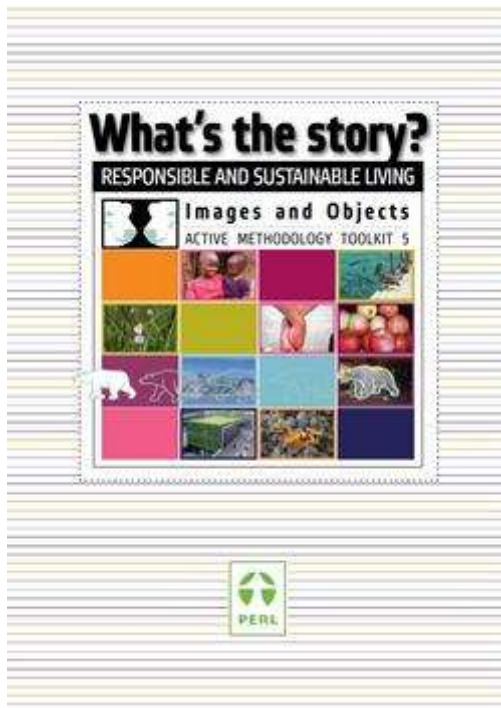
PERL’s New Active Learning Toolkit for Educators “What’s the Story”

PERL is a partnership of educators and researchers from over 140 Institutions in more than 50 countries- working to empower citizens to live responsible and sustainable lifestyles.

The power to stimulate change lies in the hands of conscious consumers and active citizens through the choices they make every day. Together with governments and business, individuals can influence local as well as global issues such as climate change, financial instability, poverty and human health.

PERL AIMS to advance education for responsible living by FOCUSING on consumer citizenship, education for sustainable consumption, social innovation and sustainable lifestyles .

The challenges we face are complex. They are systematic and personal, immediate and long-term. PERL Focus on research and education for behavior and policy change towards more responsible, sustainable living. PERL contributes to the process of assisting people to move from confusion to insight, from fear to hope, from 'me' to 'us', from words to action



A new active learning toolkit: "What's the story" was recently launched at the PERL collective workgroup meeting in April in Sligo, Ireland.

The toolkit is the fifth in the Active Methodology Images and Objects series and focuses on STORYTELLING as a key teaching and learning strategy, to explore themes related to responsible living and sustainable development. The toolkit includes background information on education for responsible and sustainable living, the Millennium and Development Goals (MDG's) and storytelling as an active learning methodology.

The target audience for the toolkit is educators, teachers and organizations who would like to run seminars and workshops on themes related to responsible living and sustainable development through the use of storytelling. The main objective of the toolkit is to help learners make responsible choices and take action for their own benefit and the benefit of others.

Copies of the Toolkit are available free of charge from perl@hihm.no

CALL TO ACTION -- PERL Survey Requested by 27 Sep



How are Sustainable Lifestyles and Responsible Living framing in everyday behaviour and practices?

The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living

PERL is a partnership of educators and researchers from over 140 institutions in more than 50 countries—working to empower citizens to live responsible and sustainable lifestyles.

PERL aims to advance education for responsible living by focusing on consumer citizenship, education for sustainable consumption, social innovation and sustainable lifestyles. This project has been carried out with the support of the European Union in the framework of the Erasmus Academic Networks. The following questionnaire is an important part of the research output of PERL and will form part of our review by the EU. We would appreciate your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire and also asking one of your colleagues who is not a member of PERL, to also complete it. We would also appreciate if you could do so until 22/09/2014 maximum

An important aspect of the work of PERL/CCN is the carrying out of research in relation to our progress and also in relation to our core themes. As part of this work, we are conducting a questionnaire investigating our attitudes and behaviours in relation to responsible living. The output of this questionnaire will be presented at our international conference in Paris and will also help the evaluation report of PERL.

We would ask you to complete the online questionnaire through the following link. This will take you less than 10 minutes. In addition we would like you to ask one of your colleagues who is not involved in PERL, or in CCN, to complete the questionnaire.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PERLworkgroup3>

Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States

Representatives from 115 countries attended the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Apia, Samoa, on 1-4 September 2014. This was the third global conference to tackle sustainable development on islands, and the first to be held in the Pacific region, after conferences in Barbados in 1994 and Mauritius in 2005, where IEF was active (see <http://iefworld.org/mim05.htm>). IEF President Arthur Dahl included the proposal for international conferences on Small Island Developing States when he was drafting chapter 17 of Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

The Conference reaffirmed the need to consider the special circumstances faced by small island developing states in achieving sustainable development. "Today marks a beginning, not an end," said Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lufalo'i Sailele Malielegaoi, in his closing statement. "Samoa is by no means the final destination for responses to small island developing states' development challenges. But it is an important launch point to key future stops on our journey to sustainably employ the few resources available to small island developing states to improve and raise the standard of living for our communities."

The meeting brought global attention to the issues that people on the islands are facing, and the solutions they have developed. It also provided a foundation for many of the issues that will be addressed at the Climate Summit later this month in New York, where more than 100 Heads of State and Government will announce actions on climate change.

UN Member States formally adopted the outcome document of the Conference, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action - or SAMOA Pathway - in which countries recognize the need to support and invest in these nations so they can achieve sustainable development.

"The motto of this Conference was 'Island voices, global choices,'" said Conference Secretary-General Wu Hongbo at the closing plenary. "The islands have made their case in a convincing way. Together, we have agreed on what needs to be done. It is now for the international community to take up these calls when the post-2015 development agenda is negotiated."

For more information on the conference, see: <http://sids2014.org>

Based in part on <http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2796&ArticleID=10973&l=en>

New UNEP Report Outlines Blue-Green Economy and Island Innovation Opportunities in Small Island Developing States

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) launched the GEO SIDS Outlook, part of its flagship Global Environment Outlook (GEO) series, during the Apia Conference on 2 September 2014. The report, based on the findings of a broad range of SIDS scientists, experts and policy makers, provides four integrated themes for action to support SIDS become the environmental economies of the future - building a diversified, blue-green economy; technological leapfrogging; giving priority to island culture; and reconnecting with nature.

Speaking at a press conference on the report were H.E. Anote Tong, President of the Republic of Kiribati; H.E. Rolph Payet, Minister of Environment and Energy of Seychelles; UN Under-Secretary-General and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner; and Philip Weech, GEO SIDS Outlook expert and Director of the Bahamas Environment Science and Technology Commission. The event was moderated by UNEP Chief Scientist Jacqueline McGlade.

"Small Island Developing States presently face a number of major challenges and hardships," said Mr. Steiner. "Many suffer from isolation and high

costs associated with long distances from global markets, and lag behind in the adoption of new technologies and innovation. Growing populations concentrated in urban areas are putting stress on island resources and the health effects of unsafe water, poor sanitation and increasingly unhealthy diets. Meanwhile, climate change threatens biodiversity, livelihoods and even the very existence of some island nations."

"As the world enters the post-2015 era, significant changes both in global policy and on islands themselves were identified by the GEO expert teams from SIDS. Improvements in line with the

blue-green economy would include, among other things, economic diversification, economic approaches to improve the management of biodiversity, resource efficiency, and sustainable consumption and production," he added.

With almost 30 per cent of SIDS populations living in areas less than 5 metres above sea level and the size of storms in some cases exceeding the size of whole islands, estimated losses to SIDS economies could become overwhelming. In the Caribbean, changes in annual hurricane frequency and intensity could result in additional annual losses of 0.5 billion USD by 2080 to the tourism sector, meaning that without urgent action, SIDS face a future dominated by loss and damage.

Over the past two decades, there have been significant changes in SIDS economies and populations. SIDS are often highly dependent on a limited number of sectors including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and tourism. Isolation and distance from markets, coupled with a heavy dependence on air transport and shipping, has resulted in fuel prices representing up to 70 per cent of GDP in some SIDS. The ageing local infrastructure, the phasing out of preferential export regimes and small domestic markets, mean that many SIDS lack economies of scale to face competition head-on.

Human well-being has potentially decreased - the result of a demographic imbalance caused by out-migration to urban centres - eroding traditional concepts of social acceptance and the spread of non-communicable disease such as diabetes. Fragmentation is also hindering communications, community building, participatory engagement in development and delivery of island services.

Many SIDS are already taking significant action: 38 countries have ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and there are many regional activities providing SIDS with early warning systems and climate adaptation plans. In the energy sector, whilst fossil fuels remain at the core for power generation, agriculture and transport, many SIDS are now pursuing domestic renewable energy sources through initiatives such as SE4ALL (Sustainable Energy For All), and SIDS DOCK- (sustainable energy initiative for geothermal energy) and improvements in energy efficiency. But SIDS still face difficulties in the adoption of new technologies and innovation and the capacity to sustain them in an island setting.

The GEO SIDS Outlook report provides an integrated narrative for the future of SIDS based on an analysis of realizable opportunities, case studies and policy actions. It connects the need for improved basic services such as waste management, affordable energy and food security, to the sustainable management of natural resources, the development of a diversity of small to medium enterprises to support the blue-green economy and key sectors such as tourism, and access to technology and financing.

The UNEP GEO SIDS Outlook is a follow-up to the UNEP/UN DESA Foresight Process report on "Emerging Issues for Small Island Developing States" to which island expert and IEF President Arthur Dahl contributed. It is a part of the ongoing UNEP Environment Outlook process, helping to ensure that there is a SIDS voice at the global assessment level, and is a contribution to the development of the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

The UNEP SIDS Foresight Process identified 22 emerging environmental issues and 15 socio-economic issues. The environmental issues comprised of three cross-cutting issues (beyond GDP; unique human capacities for island sustainability and synergizing indigenous and local knowledge and modern science as a basis for sustainable island development) and 19 others covering rehabilitation of biodiversity and ecosystem services; sustainable use of natural resources; managing threats from chemicals and waste and climate change and its impacts. The report demonstrated the potential leading role that SIDS can play in defining and implementing holistic models of sustainability and human well-being.

The SIDS Outlook process was based on the key issues identified in the Foresight Report and raised by SIDS in their submissions to the UN Conference on SIDS. At the core of the SIDS Outlook was the UNEP Live Community of Practice on SIDS made up of government experts, scientist and policy-makers. An author group, drawn from the Community of Practice and including Arthur Dahl, was invited to interpret what is known today about the state and trends in the SIDS environment and to articulate a set of themes for outlooks and policy choices for the future.

The Community of Practice developed a shared understanding of the key attributes that would be

needed to develop future sustainable development pathways for SIDS, referring to the six themes of the SIDS conference in Samoa and the latest set of Sustainable Development Goals. During the book sprint, the author group made reference to the latest information provided in the national reports submitted to the Third UN SIDS International Conference, international scientific analyses, such as the Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC, research reports, emerging issues also facing SIDS, case studies on good practice and solutions to key challenges in SIDS.

From these inputs, the expert group developed an ensemble of SIDS outlooks - the blue-green economy; technological leapfrogging; priority to island community and culture; and reconnecting with nature - and a set of enabling actions. Finally, the expert group suggested critical elements for a SIDS sustainability policy framework, taking into account the draft SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway, the draft Sustainable Development Goals and the national submissions of SIDS to the Samoa Conference, to allow SIDS to navigate the challenging waters ahead and implement pathways to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication. IEF President Arthur Dahl was the only islands expert

to serve both on the expert team that developed the UNEP SIDS foresight report and one of the principal authors of the GEO SIDS outlook, developing the four integrated themes for action, among others.

To download UNEP Emerging Issues for Small Island Developing States: Issues for Small Island Developing States-2014Emerging issues.pdf
http://apps.unep.org/publications/index.php?option=com_pmtdata&task=download&file=-Emerging

To download the full GEO SIDS Outlook Environment Outlook: small island developing states-2014GEO_SIDS_final.pdf
http://apps.unep.org/publications/index.php?option=com_pmtdata&task=download&file=-Global

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Based on
<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=2796&ArticleID=10969&l=en>

Report from the SIDS Grass Roots - Marshall Islands

From IEF member Carol Curtis on Majuro 11 September 2014

The Marshall Islands just held their first public Climate Change Summit open to everyone. It was organized by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and first day we had a wonderful presentation in Marshallese with a good power point also all in Marshallese, explaining Climate Change, various terminology, ElNino/LaNina, warming of the ocean, etc. It was a superb presentation. We broke into smaller groups and discussed a few questions given to us, such as - What will the Marshall Islands look like in 2090? What will life be like for our children in 2090? etc. Basically every group came to the conclusion that we will have to move!!! Big question is where, but everyone thinks of only the U.S. while I think about Fiji where large tracts of land can be purchased etc., and where other peoples have moved to, such as the Banaban Islanders.



Then the next day we broke into small groups again and focused on the situation today in regards to Food Security, Water, Education, Energy, Climate Change Mainstreaming, and Coastal Management. Of course there are a million unknowns, and a billion questions and issues around all of this!!! Very complex, scary, and challenging for all of humanity. Kathy Jitnel-Kijner was chosen from around the world to speak before the UN Climate Summit on September 23, 2014. Very exciting for her and an honor for our islands. I still wonder when humanity will really start listening to the "little people."

I just wish the issues around climate change were easier to deal with, especially in an atoll environment where the ocean keeps creeping up higher and higher on to our so very limited land. I spent a fabulous month on Lae Atoll with my adopted family and many of them asked me if I thought the islands would disappear. They are well aware of the climate and weather changes they are experiencing, the changes in seasons for foods such as breadfruit, and pandanus, and the recent severe droughts. I noticed while there that in a particular area

between two islands in the atoll that are very close together, all the sea cucumbers are gone. I asked about this, and several people thought that they may have died because of the severe drought last year and the ocean water being so hot in this area during low tide. Lae is still one of the most gorgeous places on the planet with a population of about 350 people all living on one island in the atoll. Lae Atoll has 16 islands with a total land area of a half of square mile and a lagoon of about 6.5 sq miles.

Another observation on Lae, for me was that so much of the coral in the lagoon, nearest to the shorelines was dead, especially the staghorn coral. It was completely wiped out in some areas, and the types of coral that I used to commonly see in certain places where I often snorkeled in the late 60's early to mid 70's, have been replaced by completely different types of coral. I asked the men about this, and they said they had noticed for awhile much of the coral dying off, and we all thought that again it might be caused by the very warm, even hot lagoon water during low tide, especially under drought conditions as they had last year. Although I couldn't verify it myself, many people said that during high tides the ocean water on the ocean side of the islands is much higher now, at least during certain times of the year, and on the lagoon side they are seeing some erosion in areas that no one has ever seen before, at least during the lifetime of the older people living on Lae today. The King Tides this past March brought ocean water here in parts of Majuro and a few other atolls into homes and destroyed some houses and vegetation wherever the water went. But all natural ocean side protection in the main town area of Majuro has been destroyed and flattened out when houses and other structures were built on the land almost to the high tide mark.

Deforestation – What is Causing it and How can we Prevent it?

From Michael Richards, IEF member



Most people realise how vital forests are – deforestation and forest degradation cause about 11% of carbon emissions (while growing and standing forests absorb a fifth of emissions), devastate biodiversity, and harm water quality/flows and air quality. This is not to mention the social importance of forests, especially tropical forests – over a billion people, many of them very poor, depend on forests for all or part of their livelihoods and welfare. This includes about 200 million indigenous people and over 400 million in other ‘forest communities’. Data just released (<http://www.wri.org/news/2014/09/release-new-analysis-finds-over-100-million-hectares-intact-forest-area-degraded-2000>) reveals that over 100 million hectares of the world’s remaining ‘pristine intact forest’ - an area three times the size of Germany – were deforested or degraded from 2000 to 2013.

This opinion piece looks at some the causes of, and solutions to, deforestation in the hope that people may find it useful as we head towards the critical climate change summit in Paris at the end of 2015. It should be noted that it is quite biased towards tropical deforestation, reflecting the experience of the writer (deforestation of boreal temperate forests in places like Siberia has also become very significant).

Why does deforestation happen? There are many interconnected direct and underlying causes, including poor governance and policies; soaring demand for palm oil, soya and beef; illegal logging; roads into forest areas; fire; weak property rights; mining, oil and gas exploration; etc. Underlying these are excessive consumption linked to a materialistic value system, and rapid population growth. Deforestation mainly happens because it is more profitable to cut a tree or forest down than keep it. Behind this is the problem of ‘market

failure.’ There are no markets, or very weak markets, for forest ecosystem services – these are ‘public goods’ which are not paid for but people benefit from them. Therefore forests have very high social and environmental values, and low financial values. Even wood is undervalued in terms of its ‘real’ cost – partly due to illegal logging. When something is cheap, more of it is consumed.

Therefore a key way of tackling deforestation is to increase the value of forests by getting the beneficiaries of ecosystem services to pay for them. Most progress has been made around the value of carbon since reducing deforestation and promoting tree planting are essential climate change mitigation strategies. *The Economist* magazine (August 23–29 2014, p.12) recently noted that “encouraging countries to plant trees (or discouraging them from logging) is by far the most effective way of reducing greenhouse-gas emissions,” and reported a calculation that the

success of Brazil in reducing its deforestation rate by two-thirds from 2005 to 2013 saved six times more carbon than the high cost (due to expensive renewable energy technologies) efforts of “ultra-green Germany” over the same period.

This potential has long been recognized in the United Nations Climate Change Convention, which has developed a mechanism of compensating countries for reducing deforestation called ‘Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation’ (REDD+ (the plus mainly refers to tree planting). This is a mechanism not without controversy due to its carbon trading element. But due to the global governance failure (so far) to establish meaningful emissions reduction targets, there is a very low demand and thus price for REDD+ carbon credits. Therefore national REDD+ programmes and projects are not economically viable. It looks like some REDD+ programmes may be paid for through bilateral agreements, e.g., Norway buying Indonesia’s REDD+ carbon credits. This is a type of aid and is of doubtful sustainability compared to a market-based solution.

The other side of the coin as to why a tree or forest is cut down is that it is too easy. A lot of deforestation is illegal, but forest laws are weakly enforced. Government policies may also encourage deforestation. The perpetrators may be illegal loggers or small farmers, but are more likely to be businessmen establishing oil palm, soya or other agricultural plantations, and in Latin America, cattle ranchers. Many plantations are illegal or involve doubtful ways of obtaining the forest land. International efforts to encourage governments to improve law enforcement and governance (including tackling corruption) are linked with efforts to curb the illegal timber trade, and include the EU Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) initiative and the US Lacey Act. A law banning illegal wood imports into the EU was passed in 2013. But these efforts are proving quite difficult due to vested interests and since timber exporting countries can switch to ‘easier’ markets such as China and the Middle East.

Consumers, especially wealthier ones, can play a complementary role to these efforts by wherever possible buying products that have gone through a credible certification process as having been produced legally and sustainably. The potential role of consumers can be gaged from recent research (www.forest-trends.org/illegal-deforestation.php) showing that almost half of all

deforestation 2001-2012 was due to illegal commercial agriculture (mainly plantation crops), half of it due to overseas demand. Some corporates like Unilever have made serious efforts to develop a sustainable supply chain, and initiatives like the Roundtables for Sustainable Palm Oil, Soy and Beef are beginning to gain ground in promoting better management and governance in food industry supply chains. But such efforts cover only a fraction of supply, e.g., about half of all packaged supermarket products contain palm oil (<http://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/which-everyday-products-contain-palm-oil>).

Another important way of reducing deforestation, but one that has perhaps received less international attention, is by recognising and supporting the property rights of forest peoples (indigenous people and other forest-dependent communities). A recent report called “Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change” (<http://www.wri.org/securingrights>) presents research showing that deforestation rates are significantly and consistently lower in forests managed by forest peoples compared to state owned/managed forests, including protected areas or national parks. For example, from 2000 to 2012, forest loss on indigenous territories in Brazil was 0.6% compared to 7% elsewhere, resulting in 36% more carbon retention per hectare in indigenous areas.

Currently forest peoples have legal rights over about an eighth of the world’s forest (not all of which is respected), but much more forest is under ‘customary rights’ that are not legally recognised. For example, in Indonesia, only one of 42 million hectares of forest with indigenous customary rights has been legally recognised. Consequently oil palm concessions have been granted over much of this area, and Indonesia has one of the highest deforestation rates in the world (this includes peat forests which are perfect for oil palm after the very carbon-rich soil has been drained).

It is no coincidence that the two countries with most recent success in reducing their deforestation rates, Brazil and Mexico, have large proportions of their forest under indigenous or community control or ownership (80% in the case of Mexico). It is also significant that these are mid-income countries which, like industrialised countries, can better afford to pay for conservation – there is a strong correlation between rising national income and falling deforestation.



It was earlier mentioned that the cause and problems are interrelated, including the underlying values issues. Similarly the solutions are interconnected -

in fact they must be combined to be successful, as shown by the example of Brazil. How has Brazil managed to reduce its deforestation rate by more than two-thirds (and over almost half the world's remaining tropical forests)? First and foremost it has involved strong political will, especially by the Lula government, to improve law enforcement and governance. Much of the success is attributed to a moratorium on soya cultivation and ranching after forest clearance, and efforts to clamp down on illegal logging. This has been facilitated by state of the art and publicly accessible satellite imagery that has enabled NGOs and others to alert the authorities promptly where it is happening. Complementing this, Brazil is a pioneer of REDD+, various Brazilian States have systems of payments for ecosystem services, and about 300 indigenous territories have been legally recognised since 1980.

All these approaches have a strong equity or ethical rationale, in addition to the spiritual guidance from all world religions to care for the environment. Thus behind attempts to increase forest values is the principle that beneficiaries of ecosystem services should pay for them; honesty, justice and equity underpin efforts to improve governance and law enforcement; and there are strong equity arguments around the long-held customary land rights, our historical and on-going debt to forest peoples for the ecosystem services, and the poverty reduction impacts of such actions. And as consumers we can apply environmental and equity criteria on a daily basis.

In sum if we want tropical countries and forest peoples to conserve or sustainably manage their forests, we will have to find a way of paying them. The various strategies discussed above can be most logically combined within the framework of REDD+. Firstly REDD+ depends for its success on good forest governance, law enforcement and secure property rights, and many studies show that community-based conservation would be the most cost-effective REDD+ strategy. REDD+ provides a

way of compensating forest communities and tropical countries, including for foregone development benefits had they decided to 'cash in' on the timber. It should be recalled that the development of industrialised countries relied significantly on both domestic and overseas exploitation of natural resources – colonial powers practiced illegal logging on a vast scale. The compensation or payment can be in the form of education, health services, social infrastructure, etc., rather than cash payments which are often problematic.

None of this is easy. REDD+ in its current form is too complex and costly, the cultural and social identity of forest peoples, essential for conservation, is being rapidly eroded, and vested interests associated with agricultural or timber concessions tend to block required legislation and governance. And a major missing ingredient is how to pay for REDD+. This brings us back to the importance of the emission reduction targets, and making carbon a valuable commodity that reflects its environmental and social importance. Since we are in a race against time - no-one knows when an ecological tipping point could be reached when 'positive feedback' problems such as methane release from the permafrost and Arctic Ocean spiral out of control - many see the Paris climate change summit in 2015 as a 'last chance saloon' for REDD+ as well as for all the other climate change mitigation strategies that need funding.

Essentially this comes down to the need for strong global governance of environmental problems based on the concepts of global citizenship and the oneness of humanity. As pointed out in a statement by the Bahá'í International Community, "much has been said about the need for cooperation to solve a climate challenge that no nation or community can solve alone. The principle of the oneness of humankind... seeks to move beyond utilitarian notions of cooperation to anchor the aspirations of individuals, communities and nations to those of the progress of humanity. In practical terms, it affirms that individual and national interests are best served in tandem with the progress of the whole ... a new paradigm by means of which we can understand our purpose and responsibilities in an interconnected world; a new standard by which to evaluate human progress; and a mode of governance faithful to the ties that bind us as members of one human race" (Bahá'í International Community, Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the challenge of climate change, 2008).



UN Climate Summit 2014

Climate change is not a far-off problem. It is happening now and is having very real consequences on people's lives. Climate change is disrupting national economies, costing us dearly today and even more tomorrow. But there is a growing recognition that affordable, scalable solutions are available now that will enable us all to leapfrog to cleaner, more resilient economies.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is

hosting the Climate Summit to engage leaders and advance climate action and ambition. The Summit will serve as a public platform for leaders at the highest level – all UN Member States, as well as finance, business, civil society and local leaders from public and private sectors – to catalyze ambitious action on the ground to reduce emissions and strengthen climate resilience and mobilize political will for an ambitious global agreement by 2015 that limits the world to a less than 2-degree Celsius rise in global temperature.

The Climate Summit will be about action and solutions that are focused on accelerating progress in areas that can significantly contribute to reducing emissions and strengthening resilience – such as agriculture, cities, energy, financing, forests, pollutants, resilience and transportation.

The Summit is not part of the UNFCCC negotiating process. By promoting climate action, it aims to show that leaders across sectors and at all levels are taking action, thus expanding the reach of what is possible today, in 2015, and beyond.

The Case for Global Action

The benefits of taking action to address climate change have become ever more compelling. Many countries and businesses have recognized the opportunities related to decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening resilience. Now is the time for leaders everywhere to join the race for transformative action that can drive economic competitiveness and sustainable prosperity for all.

Countries are presently working toward a new climate agreement and a new set of sustainable development goals that will be concluded in 2015. The objectives of both of these processes present an unprecedented opportunity.

Eradicating poverty and restructuring the global economy to hold global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius are goals that – acted on together – can provide prosperity and security for this and future generations. To meet the full scale of the global climate challenge and seize the opportunities at hand, domestic efforts must be scaled up and simultaneously leveraged through an international framework that provides incentives. Combined, accelerated action and increased ambition will foster a 'race to the top' that can help advance sustainable development.

<http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit/>



<http://peoplesclimate.org/march/>



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Faculty: **Christine Muller**, **Gary Colliver**, **Arthur Lyon Dahl**, **Carole Flood**

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- * What are the relevant ethical and spiritual teachings to deal with the crisis?
- * How can we personally help to solve the crisis?
- * How can we offer the Baha'i principles in public discourse about this issue?
- * How do we deal with the politicization of this crucial issue for the future of humanity?

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The **Climate Change** course explores the basic science of climate change and provides an understanding of how climate disruption impacts us today and will continue to affect us in the future. We will explore ethical questions related to climate change and address them in the context of the spiritual teachings of the world's religions, especially those of the Baha'i Faith. Some readings will help us make enlightened decisions for our personal and community lives that are consistent with our spiritual and ethical values. Finally, we will learn to participate in public discourse by being empowered to present, from a Baha'i perspective, spiritual responses to the climate crisis to those who are concerned about climate change. For those interested in a more thorough study of climate change and its spiritual dimensions or who are interested in specific aspects of it, the course offers numerous optional resources.