



**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

Website www.iefworld.org
Article submission newsletter@iefworld.org
Secretariat Email ief@iefworld.org
President Email ief@iefworld.org
Postal address 12B Chemin de Maisonneuve, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

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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.



UN adopts new Global Goals, charting sustainable development for people and planet by 2030

**The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly today formally adopted the 2030
Agenda for Sustainable Development**



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UN Photo/Cia Pak

25 September 2015 - The 193-Member United Nations General Assembly today formally adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, along with a set of bold new Global Goals, which Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon hailed as a universal, integrated and transformative vision for a better world.

"The new agenda is a promise by leaders to all people everywhere. It is an agenda for people, to end poverty in all its forms - an agenda for the planet, our common home," declared Mr. Ban as he opened the UN Sustainable Development Summit which kicked off today and wraps up Sunday.

The UN chief's address came ahead of the Assembly's formal adoption of the new framework, Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is composed of 17 goals and 169 targets to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

The Goals aim to build on the work of the historic Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which in September 2000, rallied the world around a common 15-year agenda to tackle the indignity of poverty.

The Summit opened with a full programme of events, including a screening of the film *The Earth From Space*, performances by UN Goodwill Ambassadors Shakira and Angélique Kidjo, as well as call to action by female education advocate and the youngest-ever Nobel Laureate, Malala Yousafzai along with youth representatives as torch bearers to a sustainable future.

The adoption ceremony was presided over by Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who stressed the successes of the MDGs and the need for the full implementation of the new Agenda.

Speaking to the press after the adoption of the Agenda, Mr. Ban said: "These Goals are a blueprint for a better future. Now we must use the goals to transform the world. We will do that through partnership and through commitment. We must leave no-one behind."

In his opening address to the Assembly, which also marks the Organization's 70th anniversary, the UN chief hailed the new framework as an agenda for shared prosperity, peace and partnership. "It conveys the urgency of climate action. It is rooted in gender equality and respect for the rights of all."

Mr. Ban urged the world leaders and others convened at the event to successfully implement the Global Goals or Agenda 30 by launching 'renewed global partnership.'

"The 2030 Agenda compels us to look beyond national boundaries and short-term interests and act in solidarity for the long-term. We can no longer afford to think and work in silos.

Institutions will have to become fit for a grand new purpose. The United Nations system is strongly committed to supporting Member States in this great new endeavour," said Mr. Ban.

"We must engage all actors, as we did in shaping the Agenda. We must include parliaments and local governments, and work with cities and rural areas. We must rally businesses and entrepreneurs. We must involve civil society in defining and implementing policies - and give it the space to hold us to account. We must listen to scientists and academia. We will need to embrace a data revolution. Most important, we must set to work - now," added the Secretary-General.

"Seventy years ago, the United Nations rose from the ashes of war. Governments agreed on a visionary Charter dedicated to 'We the Peoples'. The Agenda you are adopting today advances the goals of the Charter. It embodies the aspirations of people everywhere for lives of peace, security and dignity on a healthy planet," said Mr. Ban.

General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft called the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development "ambitious" in confronting the injustices of poverty, marginalization and discrimination.

"We recognize the need to reduce inequalities and to protect our common home by changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production. And, we identify the overwhelming need to address the politics of division, corruption and irresponsibility that fuel conflict and hold back development," he said.

On the adoption of the new agenda, UN Economic and Social Council President (ECOSOC) Oh Joon said action on Sustainable Development Goals must start immediately. "The Economic and Social Council stands ready to kick-start the work on the new agenda," he added.

DOWNLOAD [A/70/L.1 - Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)
[Arabic] [Chinese] [English] [French][Russian] [Spanish]

DOWNLOAD [Policy Coherence of the Sustainable Development Goals](#) PDF at
http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/50244/publications/Policy_Coherenceofthe_Sustainable_DevelopmentGoals.pdf

UNEP Live SDG Portal Launched at UN Summit Meetings in New York

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=26844&ArticleID=35452&l=en>



New York, 25 September 2014 - The United Nations Environment Programme has launched a new portal to assist in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The interactive dashboard visualizes the multiple pathways between the Sustainable Development Goals, Targets and potential Indicators and shows how they are connected through the new SDG Interface Ontology.

The design is aimed at supporting multiple policy targets with a small set of indicators that can track improvements and changes in outcomes and underlying causes.

The new portal also contains a highly innovative set of multilingual web intelligence tools that continuously assimilates information from worldwide online sources of news, social networking, Fortune 1000 companies and environmental organizations to provide users with an analysis of stakeholder perceptions and the ability to track emerging trends in key environmental areas.

The portal is part of the wider UNEP Live, which weaves together the environmental and socio-economic data of the complex world we live in to create a big picture, showing not only how challenges are interlinked, but how addressing one problem can bring multiple benefits in other areas.

Since its launch in 2014, UNEP Live has evolved from a source of data and knowledge into a distributed knowledge platform enabling access to live data and information about the environment all over the world. It now provides access to the latest UN data for all UN Member States, publications, maps, charting and mapping functionalities and other resources on the environment, society and the economy.

The platform - available in 90 languages - allows countries, researchers, communities of practice and other UNEP stakeholders to access and share data and knowledge from global, regional and national sources. Near real-time data of air quality indexes, volcanic activity, sea-level rise and spatial visualization of red-list species and freshwater treaties are already available. National data-sets from over 100 countries are also online. UNEP Live hosts seven Communities of Practice, with over 1,000 members.

IEF actively involved in UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December

As mentioned in the August newsletter, the International Environment Forum proposed four events for the Climate Generations area for civil society at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) at Le Bourget in Paris on 30 November-11 December 2015. Three of those have now been accepted by the conference secretariat. The speakers for these events are still trying to organize their travel and subject to change. Other IEF members may also join the team in Paris. The events are as follows:

Community resilience in the face of climate-driven extreme events, a Vanuatu case study **Saturday 5 December, 13:45-15:15 in Room 8**

Climate change adaptation requires increased resilience at the community level, and this workshop will use a case study of the island of Tanna, Vanuatu, hit by Cyclone Pam in March 2015, to discuss tools for building social cohesion at the rural village level, and more broadly in communities and neighbourhoods that are vulnerable to extreme climate events.

Speakers:

- Arthur Dahl, former Coordinator, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and advisor to the Government of Vanuatu
- Javier Gonzales Iwanciw, Universidad Nur - Bolivia, formerly National Climate Change Program, Bolivia (tbc)
- Janot Mendler de Suarez, Technical Advisor, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
- Serik Tokbolat, Baha'i International Community

Principles for accountability for climate change agreements

Thursday 10 December, 13h45-15h15 in Room 8

Signing an agreement is only the first step in going from policy to action. Experience is now showing that agreements need to be accompanied by processes within a well established governance framework to hold parties accountable for implementing the commitments made and decisions taken. Accountability can take various forms, internal or external, by peers or the general public, with statistics or qualitative measures, with different levels of effectiveness. This workshop will explore the challenges of accountability in international governance in general and for the Paris outcomes in particular, and encourage all those present to consider the accountability mechanisms relevant to their own situations, including for governments, communities, the public, the media, and civil society organizations.

Speakers:

- Prof. Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Public Administration and Policy Group, Wageningen University, Netherlands
- Dr. Arthur Dahl, International Environment Forum, Switzerland, and retired senior UNEP official (tbc)
Prof. Victoria Thoresen, Hedmark University College, Norway, and UNESCO Chair for Education about Sustainable Lifestyles
- Dr. Mojgan Sami, University of California Irvine Sustainability Initiative, USA (tbc)

Values-based climate change education

Friday 11 December, 11:30-13:00, in Room 9

Values-based education for responsible living can motivate adjustments in mindsets and behavior individually and in communities. This workshop will introduce approaches to values-based education developed by EU-funded research and networks, including toolkits for use in secondary schools. One example is on-line and community interfaith courses on the scientific and spiritual dimensions of climate change, for which course materials are freely available in both English and French. These demonstrate the potential of interfaith approaches to climate change education.

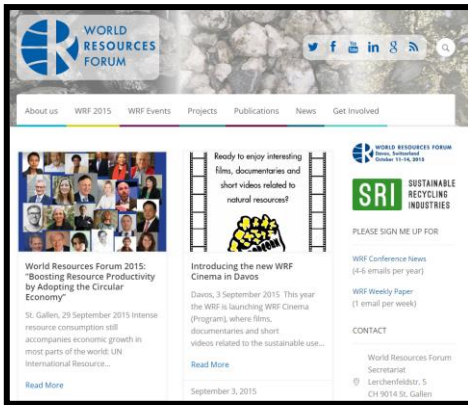
Speakers:

- Prof. Victoria Thoresen, Hedmark University College, Norway, Director of the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL) and UNESCO Chair for Education about Sustainable Lifestyles
- Dr. Arthur Dahl, President, International Environment Forum, Switzerland, and partner in EU-funded project on Values-based Indicators of Education for Sustainable Development
- Javier Gonzales Iwanciw, Universidad Nur - Bolivia, formerly National Climate Change Program, Bolivia (tbc)
- Peter Adriance, Representative for Sustainable Development, U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

In addition, IEF board member Peter Adriance will be an official Baha'i delegate for the two weeks of the intergovernmental conference, and IEF president Arthur Dahl will join him for the second week.

ebbf 25th Annual Conference

IEF's sister Baha'i-inspired organization and frequent partner, ebbf - Ethical Business Building the Future, held its 25th annual conference in Barcelona, Spain, on 1-4 October, with the theme "Unity and collaboration to create meaningful and purposeful organizations ready for the 21st Century". Almost 160 participants of all ages and from around the world, including 6 members who attended the first meeting 25 years before, followed short keynotes, meaningful conversations and learnshops. They shared recent experience with social enterprises, innovative products for the poor, and new approaches to organization. Arthur Dahl gave a keynote on "Scientific and Spiritual Dimensions of Unity and Collaboration", and his presentation is available at <http://www.slideshare.net/ebbf/ebbf25-the-science-and-spirituality-of-collaboration-arthur-dahl>. At the ebbf General Assembly, IEF board members Wendi Momen and Arthur Dahl were re-elected to the ebbf Governing Board, maintaining the close tie between the two organizations.



World Resources Forum

<http://www.wrforum.org/>

At the World Resources Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, on 11-14 October, a plenary session on "Sustainable Lifestyles and Education" featured IEF board member Victoria Thoresen, as well as our good friends Marilyn Mehlmann of Global Action Plan (GAP) International and Lewis Akenji of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, who have spoken at previous IEF joint conferences. Arthur Dahl was there at the same time as an invited expert at the parallel International Resource Panel meeting. The following is a summary of some of the presentations on sustainable lifestyles and education of particular interest to IEF.

Lewis Akenji provided a new vocabulary for lifestyles, going beyond the typical middle class which is most often the focus of approaches to make lifestyles more sustainable. Noting that lifestyles are determined both by attitudes and access (what you want and what you actually have access to), he developed a socio-ecological typology of lifestyles:

- elitists who look down from the top
- uberists who think the world is theirs
- revelers who are career driven and showing off
- eco-westerners with wealth and education wanting a good green life
- aspirants who watch TV and want to be like the Americans
- traditionalists who are comfortable, conservative, with high social status who do not need to consume
- reluctant adapters who are caught up in development but nostalgic for the past
- challengers who feel lost in consumerism and are seeking alternative lifestyles
- the vulnerable who are poor and lack access to possibilities for more consumption
- the indigent in extreme poverty who have nothing

He concluded that planning for sustainable lifestyles must account for the dynamism and aspirations of these groups rather than a static middle class.

Marilyn Mehlmann addressed the global food regime, which is the single biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, occupying 25% of all habitable land and using 70% of the world's freshwater. It is the biggest destroyer of biodiversity and the biggest contributor to ill health between the underfed and the overfed. Food waste accounts for 30-40% of the food produces, with 25% thrown out by the consumers. She proposed phasing out subsidies for unsustainable food production, disposing of food waste more productively, and reviewing education in the schools, for the public, and for food professionals. The problem can be addressed by a combination of regulation, education and personal action. Research is needed on more sustainable agriculture, the nutritional impacts of food production, and small-scale farming, among others.

Victoria Thoresen concluded the session by showing that education for sustainable lifestyles is a valuable investment. Knowledge and skills are the true global currency. Education needs to be seen more broadly to include creative critical thinking, the ability to collaborate, and curiosity, courage, generosity and trustworthiness. Education is essential to achieve all of the Sustainable Development goals in addition to goal 4 on education. Learning is not just in the too authoritarian school systems of today, but should be active, integrating and providing insights, and helping to understand systems and processes. Education should address what is the purpose in life, people's real needs and desires, and what motivates our daily choices. Values are neglected; we should be teaching unity in diversity, justice, equity and other values. This would help to address the knowledge-action gap, where we know but do not seem to care. We know a lot today about active learning and values-based learning, using a bottom-up approach. The 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production includes a theme on sustainable lifestyles, and UNESCO has the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development, but there is a lack of funding to implement them. The challenge is to support this important area of education.



World Bank Group Pledges One-Third Increase in Climate Financing

At Annual Meetings, institution announces annual funding could total \$29 billion

LIMA, Peru, October 9, 2015—The World Bank Group today announced it will increase climate financing to potentially \$29 billion annually with the support of its members, giving a huge boost to global efforts to help countries tackle the impacts of climate change and move toward low-carbon growth.

Currently, 21 percent of the Bank Group’s funding is climate related. **President Jim Yong Kim** said today that could rise to 28 percent in 2020 in response to client demand, representing a one-third increase in climate financing. The World Bank Group now provides an average of \$10.3 billion a year in direct financing for climate action. If current financing levels were maintained, this would mean an increase to \$16 billion in 2020.

In addition, the Bank Group plans to continue current levels of leveraging co-financing for climate-related projects; at current financing levels, that could mean up to another \$13 billion a year in 2020. The direct financing and leveraged co-financing together represent an estimated \$29 billion.

The announcement was made during the Annual Meetings of World Bank Group and IMF in Lima in a private meeting of ministers who gathered to talk about climate financing ahead of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21). The climate meeting will be held in Paris at the end of November and December and aims to strike a global agreement on climate, which includes delivering on a promise to provide developing countries with \$100 billion a year in climate financing by 2020. The World Bank Group’s announcement responds to developing countries’ calls for new resources to help address climate challenges.

“We are committed to scaling up our support for developing countries to battle climate change,” Kim said. “As we move closer to Paris, countries have identified trillions of dollars of climate-related needs. The Bank, with the support of our members, will respond ambitiously to this great challenge.”

The World Bank Group’s climate finance pledge is dependent on client demand and on maintaining current financial capacity. The Bank Group’s Board has agreed to a roadmap to review its shareholding and financing capacity in the coming years.

The investments will boost support for renewable energy and energy efficiency, climate-smart transport solutions, resilient cities, the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes, enhanced water security, and agricultural practices.

In the meeting of ministers, which was called by Peru and France, **Kim** called the financing of climate action a “collective challenge. ... We all know that country needs for ending extreme poverty and boosting sharing prosperity and combatting climate change are enormous. Together, all of us here will have to find ways to respond to the expected rising demand.”

Rachel Kyte, Bank Group Vice President and Special Envoy for Climate Change, added: *“Working together, the multi-lateral development banks are showing that we will respond to the incredible demand seen in the national contribution plans filed with the United Nations. Now our focus shifts from the Commitment to finance to executing the projects and programs that will make a difference in people’s lives.”*

Climate change threatens global financial crisis

By Paul Brown, Climate News Network

<http://climatenewsnetwork.us6.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=6e13c74c17ec527c4be72d64f&id=c3e84a71fc&e=294e45c2a1>

In a world where everything is interrelated, climate change is threatening more than just the environment. The world's most influential banker says an orderly switch from fossil fuels to renewables is needed to avoid turmoil on world stock markets.

LONDON, 2 October 2015 – A warning that climate change might make the world's stock markets and banks unstable and lead to a financial crash has come from Mark Carney, chairman of the G20 countries' Financial Stability Board.

Carney, who is also Governor of the Bank of England, particularly warns about the effects on the market if panic selling occurs and there is a plunge in value of shares in fossil fuel companies and industries that produce a lot of carbon dioxide.

These companies, some of the world's largest, control one-third of stock market assets. If investors realize these stocks are overvalued and try to sell them all at once, it will cause chaos, Carney said.

The stark warning is a "remarkable intervention" from one of the world's most conservative and influential bankers, who says he will be advising the world's richest nations at the G20 summit in November to put policies in place to prevent climate change causing future severe turmoil in the markets.

Unpaid loans

He warned that banks might become unstable because the billions of dollars in loans they have made to fossil fuel companies might not be repaid.

Carney suggests that there will be a switch of investments from carbon-intensive industries to renewables. He says investments in fossil fuel companies might be seen as overvalued because, to avoid dangerous climate change, between one-fifth and one-third of all fossil fuels will need to be left in the ground.

Carney's warning is in stark contrast to the policies of George Osborne, the UK's chancellor of the exchequer, who appointed him to his role as Bank of England governor in 2012.

Osborne has this year been demolishing the UK's on-shore wind and solar subsidy programme, while providing tax breaks to North Sea oil companies to

find more reserves and giving the go-ahead for fracking gas over large areas of England.

Carney did not comment on this policy rift, saying it was up to governments not bankers to make decisions about how to move to a low-carbon economy, but he said they must manage the transition in a way that did not cause market shocks.

Speaking to Lloyd's of London, one of the biggest insurance markets in the world, he said giving investors maximum information would allow them to make sensible decisions about when to disinvest in fossil fuels.

Politicians had to manage this without suddenly revealing that some stocks were overvalued because company assets would be "stranded" because oil coal and gas would always have to remain in the ground.

He said he was going to recommend to G20 countries in November, ahead of the UN climate change conference in Paris the following month, that they start setting a carbon price so that investors could see how large companies emitting carbon dioxide would be affected.

Carney told the BBC: "The point is the risks build with time, and they build more rapidly with inaction, so climate change is a function of cumulative emissions, so the slower the action is today, the bigger the action has to be in the future.

"That would mean more abrupt change that would mean bigger shocks to the value of financial assets, bigger strains on banks and insurance companies that are exposed to those assets, so what we're trying to do is to promote as smooth an adjustment as possible. We think it can be done, and we think it can be done by providing better information."

Zero emissions

He called for the setting up of a Climate Disclosure Task Force so that all companies would have to declare how much carbon they emitted or produced, and how they were going to proceed to zero

emissions in the future. Since the G20 countries are responsible for 85% of emissions, they would be a good starting point.

“Our societies face a series of profound environmental and social challenges,” he said. “The combination of the weight of scientific evidence and the dynamics of the financial system suggest that, in the fullness of time, climate change will threaten financial resilience and longer-term prosperity.”

“While there is still time to act, the window of opportunity is finite and shrinking.”

Jeremy Leggett, founder of Solarcentury, the largest UK solar electricity company, and chairman of the CarbonTracker thinktank, described it as “a momentous announcement when such an eminent banker tells the world that climate change is the biggest issue of the future”.

He said: “Carney’s remarkable statement of position also raises the remarkable corollary that George Osborne might well now be party to the sabotage of the capital markets.” – Climate News Network

onEarth

THE POPE IS NOT ALONE!

When it comes to climate change, Pope Francis and many other world religious leaders are cut from the same cloth.

BY NICOLE GREENFIELD

<http://www.onearth.org/earthwire/world-religious-leaders-climate-change>

When Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio became pope in 2013, the new pontiff took the name Francis in honor of Saint Francis of Assisi, the 13th-century preacher known for a great love of animals and nature. So maybe it’s no surprise that yesterday Pope Francis delivered the Roman Catholic Church’s first-ever encyclical on the environment—most notably, on climate change.

“The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all,” he wrote.

Catholics regard encyclicals, or official papal letters, as authoritative teachings on a particular subject. They’re meant to instruct as well to inspire action among the flock. And Francis’ flock is big—1.2 billion strong—but he’s hoping to prompt people of all creeds, at all levels of society, to join in the battle against climate change.

World leaders will convene in Paris in December at the United Nations climate conference to hash out their countries’ carbon-reduction pledges.

Pope Francis will be in Paris, too, fighting for the actions he deems morally necessary to care for our “one single human family.” On that note, he is not the only faith leader who’s got climate on the mind. Here’s what the world’s other major religions have to say about the subject.

ISLAM (1.6 BILLION FOLLOWERS)

Environmental consciousness first took root in Islam in the 1970s, with many “green Muslims” turning to passages in the Koran that discussed the sacredness of nature. It wasn’t until 2009, however, that Sheikh Ali Gomaa, the Gran Mufti of Egypt—nicknamed the “Green Mufti”—announced a seven-year plan to make Islam more environmentally friendly. **“Pollution and global warming pose an even greater threat than war, and the fight to preserve the environment could be the most positive way of bringing humanity together,”** he said. Gomaa’s plan focused on Medina, Saudi Arabia, the religion’s second-holiest city, and included commitments to renewable energy and climate change education.

Despite these and other efforts by activists across the Muslim world, the voice of Islamic leaders has been conspicuously absent from the global dialogue on the issue. This is particularly troubling to some members of the faith since many traditionally Islamic countries are particularly prone to the impacts of climate change, such as drought and sea-level rise.

HINDUISM (1 BILLION)

The vast majority of Hindus live in India, where the effects of climate change are already devastating the country. A recent heat wave killed thousands—it wasn't the first, and it won't be the last.

As in Islam, Hindu scriptures allude strongly and often to the connection between humans and nature. These texts form the foundation of the Hindu Declaration on Climate Change, presented at a 2009 meeting of the Parliament of World Religions. In the statement, the authors accept that **“centuries of rapacious exploitation of the planet have caught up with us”** and state clearly that a radical change in our relationship to the planet is necessary for survival. The declaration also recognizes that “it may be too late to avert drastic climate change” and encourages compassionate responses to “such calamitous challenges as population displacement, food and water shortage, catastrophic weather, and rampant disease.”

PROTESTANTISM (814 MILLION)

Evangelical Protestants: Much of the non-Catholic Christian focus on climate change has centered on denial—global warming, they say, is a natural process brought about by God, not humans. Indeed, when public figures make spectacles of those beliefs (looking at you, Senator Inhofe), they're hard to ignore.

One group of evangelicals known as the Cornwall Alliance is responsible for fueling much of such misinformation. “There is no convincing scientific evidence that human contribution to greenhouse gases is causing dangerous global warming,” it stated in an official declaration in 2009. In April, the alliance responded directly to news of the upcoming encyclical with an open letter to Pope Francis outlining why “it is both unwise and unjust to adopt policies requiring reduced use of fossil fuels for energy” and encouraging the pope to “advise the world's leaders to reject them.”

About 35 to 45 percent of all evangelicals, however, are not members of the denial choir. Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe, for example, doesn't find that her faith conflicts with the facts about human-induced global warming. **“The Bible is actually very clear that there are consequences for making bad choices. Sow the seeds, bear the fruit. Climate change is the consequence of making some bad choices,”** she says in a 2012 *onEarth* article about her efforts to reach out to her religious community. Associations like the Evangelical Climate Initiative and the National Association of Evangelicals* have also accepted that climate change is anthropogenic, and in 2013 more than 200 evangelical scientists released a letter calling on Congress to address climate change. “Our nation has entrusted you with political power; we plead with you to lead on this issue and enact policies this year that will protect our climate and help us all to be better stewards of Creation,” they wrote.

Mainline Protestants: Meanwhile, many other protestant denominations have made serious commitments to combating climate change, and the United Church of Christ leads the way. It issued a resolution in 2007 admitting **“Christian complicity in the damage human beings have caused to the earth's climate system,”** and in 2013, it became the first U.S. denomination to divest from fossil fuels. Episcopalians, Anglicans, and Presbyterians have all addressed the global challenges of climate change. And in 2008, prominent leaders in the Southern Baptist Church, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States with 16 million adherents, challenged the denomination's official stance by declaring that “humans must be proactive and take responsibility for our contributions to climate change—big and small.”

BUDDHISM (488 MILLION)

You know that climate change is a serious issue if the Dalai Lama is deeming it more pressing than Tibetan independence. In a 2011 conversation with the U.S. ambassador to India, the religious leader said that “melting glaciers, deforestation, and increasingly polluted water from mining projects” were problems that couldn't wait.

Before that, as part of a scientifically grounded 2009 Buddhist declaration on climate change citing the **“ecological consequences of our collective karma,”** the Dalai Lama endorsed the 350-parts-per-million target for carbon emissions. More recently, in 2014, he addressed the dire need for climate action: “The worst possible aspect of climate change is that it will be irreversible and irrevocable. Therefore, there is the urgency to do whatever we can to protect the environment while we can.”

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY (300 MILLION)

Similar to the Green Mufti, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople, the spiritual leader of the Eastern Orthodox Church since 1991, has earned the title of “Green Patriarch” for his dedication to environmental matters.

In 2002, Bartholomew, alongside the late Pope John Paul II, addressed the issue of environmental ethics and has since repeatedly spoken about the need to protect the environment. Last year, he delivered a message at the U.N. Interfaith Summit on Climate Change about embracing the urgency of the problem. **“Each believer and each leader, each field and each discipline, each institution and each individual must be touched by the call to change our greedy ways and destructive habits.”**

SIKHISM (27 MILLION)

Close to 80 percent of all Sikhs live in the Punjab region of India, an area already deeply affected by climate change. Punjab is the country’s breadbasket, and extreme drought is threatening farmers, not to mention the entire agricultural system. With this in mind, prominent Sikh leaders joined forces in 2009 to create EcoSikh, a group dedicated to “promoting care for the environment.” That year, a month before climate talks in Copenhagen, the group partnered with the United Nations and other faith groups and announced a five-year plan to help curb climate change.

Last September, EcoSikh issued an official statement on climate change, the first of its kind from a Sikh organization. **“It is abundantly clear that our action had caused great damage to the atmosphere and is projected to cause even more damage if left unhandled,”** it declared. “As Sikhs, we appeal to lawmakers, faith leaders, and citizens of the world to take concrete action toward reducing carbon emissions and protecting the environment. As Sikhs we pledge to take concrete actions ourselves. We have a responsibility to follow our Gurus’ teachings and protect the vulnerable.”

JUDAISM (14 MILLION)

Many Jewish groups and individuals have been addressing environmental issues for years, but they have only started making official statements and calls to action on climate change in the past several years. In 2009, Commission on Social Action to the Union for Reform Judaism issued a resolution on the **“unprecedented challenge of climate change due to greenhouse gas emissions”** and need for urgent action.

But as the *Forward* reports, the People’s Climate March in September is what first catalyzed many Jewish groups—including Conservative, Renewal, and Reconstructionist—to support the event that called on leaders to come to a strong international agreement on climate change. The Orthodox movement has been a bit more reluctant, however. Its top organizations, the Orthodox Union and the Rabbinical Council of America, steered clear of the march, worrying it could get “politically hijacked.”

BAHA’I (7 MILLION)

The Baha’i faith centers on principles like unity, justice, equality, and altruism, and its teachings promote the agreement of science and religion. It is fitting, then, that the Baha’i International Community has been publicly addressing global warming for years. In a 2008 statement, the group highlighted the need for individual, community, national, and international responses to climate change, and in 2009 presented (along with EcoSikh) a seven-year action plan to confront the issue.

Last year, Peter Adriance, the representative for sustainable development for the Baha’is of the United States, spoke out in support of the Obama administration’s new rules limiting carbon pollution from power plants. **“More than purely an environmental issue, the setting of carbon standards is an issue of fairness, equity, and justice,”** he said. “My hope is that our generation will be able to leave the world directed toward a better future than the one toward which we are currently headed, a world in which all people will be able to lead safe, productive, and healthy lives.”



<http://www.arcworld.org/news.asp?pageID=789>

ARC calls for real partnership with faiths, not tokenism

September 24, 2015

As the Pope makes an historic address to the UN General Assembly tomorrow, ARC calls on the United Nations and other development partners to engage in “real partnership, not tokenism” with faith groups.

ARC Secretary General Martin Palmer said for too long the faiths have not only been ignored but often dismissed and patronised – even though more than 80% of the world’s population say they belong to a religion and faith groups are among the world’s biggest providers of education, health and aid.

They needed more than “just walk-on parts in the drama of the Sustainable Development Goal process”, he said: “Let’s be frank. The Pope’s visit to the UN could either be simply seen as a sort of good luck charm that the UN can waive around or it can be the real start of an engagement with civil society’s largest, best organised and most trusted sector – the faiths.”

Pope Francis will address the UN tomorrow ahead of a three-day summit involving more than 150 world leaders who will formally adopt 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will set the global development agenda for the next 15 years.

Faith action on the SDGs

Martin Palmer said the faiths are already taking action on many of the areas addressed in the SDGs. For example, on September 8-9, 2015, 24 faith groups and faith-based organisations around the world launched far-reaching action plans to help the world’s poorest people.

Known as the Bristol Commitments, they include pledges to develop micro credit schemes for the poor, increase access to education, plant trees, invest in clean energy, green pilgrimage and train people sustainable agriculture. They were launched by traditions from Baha’ism, Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shintoism and Sikhism.

“The Bristol Commitments show that the faiths will be doing what the UN called SDGs, whether the UN manages to find the funding and support for them or not,” said Martin Palmer.

“The door has been opened a crack. Will the UN, so often constrained by fearful officials and worried national governments, be able to take the bold step of real partnership with the world’s oldest caring organisations? Or will it go back to its usual position of distrust or even worse, patronising of the faiths?”

“The relevance of the UN will to some degree be determined by what happens next. It is fine to have general well-meaning statements of religions supporting good things but that is to give the faiths just walk-on parts in the drama of the SDGs.

“The Bristol Commitments are real, substantive offers of programmes which are already being rolled out, as being a serious contribution from civil society towards goals which, for a variety of different reasons, so many faiths share with the UN and the World Bank. That is what partnership looks like from the faith perspective.”

More information

- For more information about the Bristol UN faiths meeting, visit our [dedicated event page](#).
- To download specific faith commitments, visit [here](#).
- For photographs of the Bristol UN Faiths Meeting, visit our [Flickr site](#).
- For examples of how the faith pledges support the SDGs, visit our [Bristol Commitments page](#).
- Download a full copy of this press release [here](#).

