



**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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From the Editor, Request for information for upcoming newsletters

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

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

**IEF events at the UN Climate Change Conference
in Paris in December**

Governments are meeting soon in Paris at the largest United Nations Climate Change Conference in history to adopt a legally-binding agreement to limit greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change, and thus hopefully to save the world from a disastrous future. The official conference web site of the French Government is at <http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en>, and the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has its conference web site at http://unfccc.int/meetings/paris_nov_2015/meeting/8926.php. Documentation about the conference is available there.

The International Environment Forum is actively contributing to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) at Le Bourget in Paris on 30 November-11 December 2015. The IEF is organizing three events in the Climate Generations area for civil society, and co-sponsoring a side event at the intergovernmental conference. The Baha'i International Community is partnering in a side event on ethics at the intergovernmental conference. Details on these events will be provided on the IEF web page dedicated to the conference (<http://iefworld.org/cop21>), and reports will be posted there during and after the conference. At least 40,000 people are expected to attend the conference and its associated events.

At least 10 IEF members will be part of our team in Paris, including Peter Adriance (USA), Arthur Dahl (Switzerland), Alessia Freddo (Italy/UK), Minu Hemmati (Germany), Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (Netherlands), Janot Mendler de Suarez (USA), Temily Tavangar (Hong Kong), Victoria Thoresen (Norway), Ismael Velasco (United Kingdom), and Onno Vinkhuyzen (Netherlands).

The events are as follows:

Community resilience in the face of climate-driven extreme events, a Vanuatu case study
La résilience communautaire face aux événements climatiques extrêmes: une étude de cas à Vanuatu
Resiliencia comunitaria en la cara de los eventos extremos del clima impulsado: un estudio de caso de Vanuatu

Saturday 5 December, 13:45-15:15 in Room 8, Climate Generations Area

Climate change adaptation requires increased resilience at the community level, and this workshop will use a case study of the Baha'i community on 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:

Dr. Arthur Dahl, former Coordinator, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, and advisor to the Government of Vanuatu
 Dr. Janot Mendler de Suarez, Technical Advisor, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre
 Dr. Serik Tokbolat, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations, New York Office
 Temily Tavangar, Hong Kong University

Principles for accountability for climate change agreements
Principes de responsabilité pour les accords sur le changement climatique
Principios de la responsabilidad para los acuerdos sobre el cambio climático

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

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
 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
 Sébastien Duyck, Northern Institute for Environmental and Minority Law, Arctic Centre, Finland

Values-based climate change education
Education pour le changement climatique sur la base des valeurs
Educación para el cambio climático basada en los valores

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

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
 Peter Adriance, Representative for Sustainable Development, U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs
 Ismael Velasco, Adora Foundation, United Kingdom
 Chairperson: Janot Mendler de Suarez, Visiting Research Fellow, Boston University Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future (USA)

IEF is also co-sponsoring a side event on **Accountability after Paris** in the Dutch Pavilion at the intergovernmental conference on Wednesday 9 December, 14:00-15:30. This is being organized by IEF board member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen. More details will be available later.

The Baha'i International Community is co-sponsoring a side event in the intergovernmental conference on "Equity and Justice in INDCs" on Saturday 5 December, 16:45-18:15, with IEF board member Peter Adriance participating.

In addition, IEF board member Peter Adriance will be an official Baha'i delegate for the two weeks of the intergovernmental conference, with Serik Tokbolat of the Baha'i International Community as the second delegate for the first week and IEF president Arthur Dahl replacing him for the second week.

New Baha'i International Community Statements

The Baha'i International Community (BIC) United Nations Office has issued two new statements on the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Although they are addressed to two different audiences, some sections are common to the two statements.

On 8-9 September 2015, the BIC participated with other religious groups in the **Faith in the Future** event organized by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) and UNDP to launch **Faith Plans for a Sustainable Future** in Bristol, UK. The Baha'i statement presented there is "*Baha'i International Community Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals*". These Bristol Commitments have been published by ARC in a book, *Faith in the Future: The Bristol Commitments*, Faith Plans for a Sustainable Future, launched 8th September 2015 in response to the Sustainable Development Goals to be adopted in New York, September 2015. (Bath, UK: Alliance of Religions and Conservation). See more information from the Baha'i World News Service at <http://news.bahai.org/story/1067>.

On 13 October, the BIC issued "*Summoning Our Common Will: A Baha'i Contribution to the United Nations Global Development Agenda*" addressed more generally to the United Nations and the international community. Both statements reflect the approach of the Baha'is as a learning community trying to build more just and sustainable communities at the grass roots. They emphasize that people are the real protagonists of development, so it is essential to address the roots of motivation and to build communities of practice in which continuous learning can take place from the local to the global levels. See also the Baha'i World News Service story at <http://news.bahai.org/story/1074>.

These statements are now available on the IEF web site:

Baha'i International Community Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals
Summoning Our Common Will: A Baha'i Contribution to the United Nations Global Development Agenda



**“Summoning Our Common Will”
is a Baha'i contribution to Agenda 2030,
the UN's Sustainable Development Goals**

<http://news.bahai.org/story/1074>

15 October 2015

NEW YORK — The collective ability of the people of the world to willfully work towards their own development will be crucial in implementing major UN goals, the Baha'i International Community (BIC) says.

That is the theme of a new BIC statement released this week which seeks to offer a contribution to Agenda 2030.

The sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN General Assembly last month for achievement by 2030 include calls to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere", "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", and "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth".

The BIC praised the process by which the UN crafted the goals, noting that it involved input from eight million people in more than 193 countries, representing "the largest consultation ever conducted by the UN".

"People are at the center of Agenda 2030, and this is a major victory," says the statement, entitled "Summoning Our Common Will".

"But care must be taken lest people be treated primarily as passive objects to be developed, rather than as protagonists of development in and of themselves. The ability of people, individually and as members of communities and institutions, to achieve something they collectively value is therefore an indispensable means of achieving lasting progress."

The statement offers the experience of the worldwide Baha'i community as an example of one group that is "striving to learn about the tangible development of their neighborhoods, villages, and communities".

"To the extent that this experience can contribute to development efforts benefitting the whole of society, in keeping with the cardinal principle of the oneness of humankind, we are happy to offer it for exploration and conversation."

"Consciousness of the oneness of humankind must be the bedrock of any strategy that seeks to engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny," the statement says.

Summoning Our Common Will: A Baha'i Contribution to the United Nations Global Development Agenda

<https://www.bic.org/statements/Summoning-Our-Common-Will-Baha%E2%80%99i-Contribution-United-Nations-Global-Development-Agenda>

13 October 2015
New York

The process of crafting the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was, in many ways, unprecedented in human history. Over eight million people from 193 countries participated in the "Global Conversation" to define the new development agenda – the largest consultation ever conducted by the UN. Shortcomings and false- steps were of course encountered, as is to be expected of any initial endeavour. Nevertheless, the boundaries of international consultation were expanded in important ways: the body of humanity today is able to envision and articulate, to a degree unsurpassed in previous ages, the world it collectively desires. The central task before the international community, then, will be to build capacity in more and more collaborators with the ultimate objective of promoting universal participation in the construction of that world.

To craft a development agenda that is "accepted by all countries" and "applicable to all countries"¹ is to acknowledge the interdependence and fundamental oneness of the human race. Development is increasingly understood as a process that must benefit all and draw on the talents and capacities of all. It is not without significance that Agenda 2030 uses the term "universal" 29 times in 29 pages. A sense of common cause has been placed at the heart of the global development agenda, reflecting growing commitment to the premise that every member of the human family has not only the right to benefit from a thriving global civilization, but also the capacity to contribute to its construction. Consciousness of the oneness of humankind must be the bedrock of any strategy that seeks to engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny.

That humanity constitutes a single people is a truth that, once viewed with scepticism, claims widespread acceptance today. The rejection of the legitimacy of deeply ingrained prejudices and a growing sense of world citizenship are among the signs of this heightened awareness. But however promising this rise in collective consciousness may be, it should be seen as only the first step of a process that will unfold for years to come. For the principle of the oneness of humankind asks not merely for cooperation among people and nations. It calls, rather, for a profound reconceptualization of the relationships that sustain society, including those among individuals, communities, and institutions of governance. How are human beings to relate and act towards one another in different settings, beginning within the family? What qualities are to characterize the life of society? What principles are to govern humanity's relationship with nature? What structures will be needed to support communities distinguished by a vibrant sense of purpose? How is ownership and commitment to global development nurtured in ever-larger numbers of protagonists?

Insight into such questions is gained not once-and-for-all, but through an ongoing process of action, reflection, consultation, and exploration. Collective learning of this kind has been a significant, if sometimes overlooked, aspect of international development efforts over the past 15 years. The lessons learned in striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals – the need for more participation, stronger sense of partnership, and a wider diversity of voices, to name just a few – laid the foundations that enable the SDGs to be what they are today. The experience gained over the next 15 years will similarly shape the way development is understood and approached in the next agenda. Strengthening processes of learning at all levels, from the local to the global, is therefore a critical driver of continued progress.

Human Capacity and People as the Protagonists of Development

Many have noted that the true test of Agenda 2030 will be its practical implementation. Particularly important will be the degree that its efforts are able to secure the commitment, support and labours of the peoples of the world. Structural reform, largely the purview of Member States, will be crucial in numerous areas. But it is

people who enforce regulations or ignore them, who uphold positions of authority or abuse them. The ability of people, individually and as members of communities and institutions, to achieve something they collectively value is therefore an indispensable means of achieving lasting progress.

Appreciation for the human element has by no means been absent from contemporary discourse. The Secretary-General of the UN, for example, declared that “If we are to succeed, the new agenda cannot remain the exclusive domain of institutions and governments. It must be embraced by people.”² Yet the process of crafting the SDGs focused heavily, at times almost exclusively, on finance and technology as the means by which ambitious plans could be implemented. Financial and technological resources will of course be critical to global development. But attributing change primarily to institutions and structures significantly limits the agency of individuals and communities. People are at the center of Agenda 2030, and this is a major victory. But care must be taken lest people be treated primarily as passive objects to be developed, rather than as protagonists of development in and of themselves.

To harness the constructive potential of multitudes around the world, certain notions about what is required to make meaningful contributions to society will need to be reconsidered. Material wealth, for example, is often equated with capacity in development thought and discourse. Those with access to greater financial resources are taken to be the engines of development and the rest are relegated to secondary functions, if not excluded altogether. Yet financial capacity is not synonymous with the human capacity needed to advance constructive social transformation. Those with limited material means far outnumber those living in abundance, and no longer can it be realistically imagined that a small segment of humanity should, drawing on its own resources and according to its own views, bring about the advancement of all the rest. At this point in the development of the global community, such a proposition is neither feasible, nor desirable.

The aggregate talents of several billion individuals represent a phenomenal reservoir of resources for constructive change that has so far gone largely untapped. Efforts to achieve goals of the magnitude envisioned in Agenda 2030 will accordingly need to ensure that the contributions of those who have traditionally been regarded as passive recipients of aid are meaningfully integrated into global processes of development. Such systems will need to increasingly reflect the principle of universal participation in the betterment of society. Equally important will be building both volition and capacity in growing numbers to contribute, each according to his or her particular circumstances, to the common good. People must become the protagonists of development that is both sustainable and just.

Roots of Motivation and Communities of Practice

Human capacity is defined not only by one’s potential to achieve goals, but also one’s determination to take needed actions. For this reason, leveraging capacity has to do not only with what people are able to do, but also what they *actually choose to do*. Volition is therefore an issue of unparalleled importance. Financial resources are being mobilized at historic scales to implement the SDGs, yet global development will never be sustainably achieved through monetary means alone. A central question to be answered, then, is how qualities such as commitment and dedication are generated in large numbers of people. How do individuals and communities become motivated to contribute their efforts toward a higher cause, with no expectation of immediate, material recompense?

Faith has shown itself to be key in this regard. Whether faith in the efficacy of the development process, the capacity of the human race, the virtues of family, community, or a host of other ideals, the combination of conviction and aspiration has been central to generating motivation. Among these, religious faith plays a unique and vital role in global development efforts. Though mentioned only twice in Agenda 2030, both in the context of non-discrimination, religion has been a feature of human civilization since the dawn of recorded history, and has prompted countless multitudes to arise and exert themselves for the well-being of others. Religion offers an understanding of human existence and development that lifts the eye from the rocky path to the distant horizon. And when true to the spirit of its transcendent founders, religion has been one of the most powerful forces for the creation of new and beneficial patterns of individual and collective life.

The link between religious conviction and service to the common good, however, is by no means automatic. It is entirely possible, for example, to have a congregation of noble-thinking and well-intentioned adherents

whose actions do little to contribute to the betterment of society. Clearly there is much to learn about how noble ideals become expressed in committed, sustained action. In this sense, religious communities can be understood as communities of practice in which spiritual teachings are translated into social reality. Within them, a process of capacity building that enables people of all backgrounds to participate in the transformation of society – and protects and nurtures them – can be set in motion. How this process unfolds in different contexts and diverse environments promises to be an area of rich exploration in the coming years.

Another area ripe for investigation is the underlying causes of seemingly intractable challenges, in particular the complex interplay between material aspects and more intangible factors such as beliefs, values, norms, and ethics. Social ills often stem as much from distortions of relationships and values, as from a lack of resources. Agenda 2030, for example, asserts that “eradicating poverty in all its forms ... is the greatest global challenge.” But this challenge itself stems from an even more fundamental issue: namely those personal and collective values that allow poverty to exist in a world with sufficient resources for all. In this light, poverty reflects not simply a scarcity of material resources, but a deficiency in the way human beings perceive, relate to, and value one another.

The challenges addressed in the SDGs will require many technical and technological approaches. But lasting, sustainable progress will also require solutions which are consonant with the spiritual nature of human beings. Addressing the age-old malady of poverty might well require the redistribution of financial assets, the refinement of systems of taxation, and similar measures. But at a deeper level, eradicating poverty will require the construction of a global civilization characterized by generosity, solidarity, compassion, equity and a sustainable relationship of human beings with their environment. Corruption will ultimately be eradicated not solely by penal codes or sophisticated tracking systems, but by the establishment of a society in which honesty and trustworthiness are socially expected moral norms. And great indeed is the responsibility of religious communities to put these positive values – their values – into practice. It is incumbent on every person of insight and understanding, the Baha'i Writings state, “to strive to translate that which hath been written into reality and action.” The world's great religious teachers have each sought to promote human well-being and honour and to advance civilization. In this sense, religion, as a dynamic system of knowledge and action, fulfils an essential purpose: expanding the bonds of unity among the people of the world and transforming their inner character and outer life.

Development Efforts of the Baha'i Community

The efforts of Baha'is and their like-minded collaborators around the world present one example of a community striving to learn about the tangible development of their neighborhoods, villages, and communities. To the extent that this experience can contribute to development efforts benefitting the whole of society, in keeping with the cardinal principle of the oneness of humankind, we are happy to offer it for exploration and conversation.

Central to the Baha'i community's understanding of the process of social betterment is the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge. Over the past two decades the Baha'i community has established a decentralized, worldwide process of spiritual and moral education in tens of thousands of localities that is open to all, regardless of religion or faith background. Structured in three stages to meet the developmental needs of differing ages, the system tends to the moral education of children, facilitates the spiritual empowerment of young adolescents, and allows increasing numbers of youth and adults to explore the application of spiritual teachings to daily life and to the challenges facing society.

This educational process seeks to raise capacity within a population to take charge of its own spiritual, social, and intellectual development. Working in the neighbourhood or village setting, its participants strive to create an environment conducive to the empowerment of individuals who will come to see themselves as active agents of their own learning and protagonists of a constant effort to apply knowledge to effect individual and collective transformation. Those involved gradually build capacity to engage in purposeful discussion with people they come in contact with in daily life – neighbours, parents from their children's schools, shopkeepers, students – about the spiritual and material conditions of their communities. Crucially, service is the organizing principle of this process. The desired outcome is not for participants to simply learn things, but rather to build their capacity and increase their desire to be of tangible service to others.

The development activities in which the Baha'i community is engaged take many forms. Some begin when the first stirrings of heightened social awareness lead to the emergence of a small group which, addressing a particular social and economic reality, initiates a simple set of appropriate actions. In some cases, as those involved follow a continuous process of consultation, action, and reflection, initial efforts give rise to an endeavor of a more sustained nature. And some of these, in turn, evolve into fully fledged development organizations, with the capacity to engage in relatively complex areas of activity and to establish working relations with agencies of government and civil society.³

To strengthen the effectiveness of such efforts, the Baha'i community has built systems of learning and capacity building into its operational processes. To give one concrete example, coordinators of various kinds provide support, assistance, and accompaniment to those engaged in particular types of endeavours, helping them to face challenges, think through problems, and recover from inevitable setbacks. Working at levels ranging from the national to the neighbourhood, they contribute to a global system of learning in which experiences around a particular line of action can be systematically collected from local communities, aggregated at the national or global level, and analysed to identify significant trends and emerging patterns. Insights that arise from this process can then be disseminated back to the grassroots through these same channels, thereby informing future planning and action.

The impact of these dynamics on grassroots efforts can be significant. Those involved, wherever they may live, both contribute to and draw from a global process of learning. It shapes a way of thinking and acting that carries over into other aspects of life, such as more formal projects of development or personal professions and occupations. And even when efforts falter or seem to fail, participants know that the challenges they faced will contribute to a body of experience from which further insights will spring and further success be built.

Development efforts grow in effectiveness as they increasingly reflect the numerous dimensions of human existence. For this reason, individual Baha'is and their likeminded collaborators around the world are reaching out to neighbours of all backgrounds and, in the intimate setting of the home, creating spaces for shared worship and exploration of the deeper purpose and meaning of life. These devotional gatherings provide an accessible means of fostering unity and generating the common will needed to take action on issues of shared concern. In the context of more traditional development efforts, the spirit nurtured by communal prayer also helps protect a community against reductionist views of human nature that collapse life down to its most materialistic elements alone. It imparts a growing awareness of the transcendent and non-material aspects of human well-being, and invites exploration of how these vital aspects of individual and social life can be strengthened.

Engagement with Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

How do principles such as the oneness of mankind, the spiritual nature of human reality, and the centrality of a process of learning, find expression in tangible efforts to bring about advancements of the kind outlined in Agenda 2030? In the case of the Baha'i community, contributions toward the SDGs can be quite direct in some areas. The learning system in which youth and adults are engaged, for example, has courses that delve into specific, more technical, topics for those so interested.

Individuals in a given community might, in response to local challenges and available resources, choose to study a course in public health, gaining skills related to SDG 3 on healthy lives and well-being. A group of rural farmers might collectively choose to pursue a course in sustainable agriculture, thereby contributing to SDG 2 on hunger and food security. And of course the educational process as a whole, providing both content and training in child and adult education, is a powerful tool for pursuing the objectives of SDG 4 on inclusive education and lifelong learning.

More broadly, the efforts of the Baha'i community are intended to build capacity in individuals and institutions for selfless service to others and contribution to the common good. They help participants to analyse and understand the constructive and destructive forces operating in society, to recognize the influence these forces exert on their thoughts and actions, and to take constructive, principled action in response. Young adolescents, for example, build their capacity to undertake acts of service, but also to *discern what service is needed in their*

community. Is there a lack of jobs providing a sufficient living wage (SDG 8)? Distrust and hostility between ethnic or racial groups (SDG 16)? Exploitation and pollution of the natural environment (SDG 13)? Developing the ability to make such assessments empowers individuals to formulate action according to their own perceptions and values - prompted by a dynamic and advancing process of action and reflection.

Many of the questions central to the emergence of a prosperous global civilization will need to be answered at least in part at the level of culture. Viewed in this light, social action may well take the form of raising collective consciousness in a village or neighborhood about vital principles such as oneness, justice, and the equality of women and men; demonstrating the value of cooperation as an organizing principle for activity; and fortifying collective volition. For this reason, Baha'i efforts at social action seek to reach beyond establishing a mere set of activities, and address deeper issues such as modes of expression and patterns of thought and behaviour. Such endeavours have direct relevance to the goals articulated in Agenda 2030. For example, as the elements of the framework described above begin to take root in an increasing number of localities, the principle of universal participation on which they are founded has positively impacted relationships between women and men (SDG 5). As women have become increasingly recognized as capable and valued resources, both on the ground and in positions of coordination, their sphere of personal action has grown, their voices carry more weight in the community, and long-standing assumptions about the relationship between the sexes have become a topic of thoughtful discussion and action. Exploration of the practical implications of the proposition that all human beings are created equal before God has strengthened solidarity between classes and castes, increasing equality across a number of fronts (SDG 10) and, in some places, addressing issues of poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2) as decisions about the distribution of local resources have become more equitable and just. Similarly, in-depth exploration of the implications of the oneness of humankind has fostered a growing sense of world citizenship and strengthened commitment to more sustainable lifestyles (SDG 12).

Baha'is around the globe, in a wide range of settings, are striving to establish a pattern of activity and community life that helps translate moral and spiritual precepts into the practical forms of a new social reality. The Baha'i community readily acknowledges that to uphold high ideals and to become their embodiment are not the same thing. Yet we remain committed to this path of learning, and seek to pursue it not only in explicitly "religious" settings or "development" venues, but across all spheres of life. The Baha'i International Community commends the ambition captured in the goals and targets of Agenda 2030 and welcomes the growing global movement dedicated to learning about how this vision can gradually be translated into the reality of a spiritually and materially prospering world civilization.

¹ Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

² Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" (A/69/700).

³ Of the several thousand Baha'i efforts in social and economic development, the vast majority are fairly simple grassroots endeavors of fixed duration while, as of 2015, several hundred are larger-scale, sustained projects, including formal and community schools and over 70 development agencies.

Nov. 12, 2015

15-219

ECPD 11th International Conference in Belgrade

The European Center for Peace and Development of the University for Peace Established by the United Nations held its 11th International Conference in Belgrade, Serbia, on 24-25 October 2015 on the theme **"Future of the World Between Globalization and Regionalization"**. The International Environment Forum, through its President, Arthur Dahl, has been collaborating with the ECPD for a number of years in its work on reconciliation, religious tolerance and human security in the Balkans. The conference took place in the Belgrade City Hall, and began with a welcoming address from Sir James Mancham, founding President of the Republic of Seychelles, and a keynote from Prof. Dr. Erhard Busek, former Vice-Chancellor of Austria.

Over 30 papers were presented by distinguished academics, diplomats and political leaders from across Europe, Asia and North America, and will eventually be published by ECPD. Arthur Dahl presented a paper on "The Sustainable Development Goals and their implications for the Western Balkans" (<http://iefworld.org/ddahl15f>). The concluding plenary was addressed by Prof. Dr. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, former Director-General of UNESCO.



Among the conclusions of the conference were the need to reduce the gap between rich and poor through a better distribution of world resources, to establish a new global governance and institutions able to prevent the disorders resulting in mass migrations that are threatening the European Union, and to close the gap between the Balkans and the rest of Europe, especially through the accession of all Balkan countries to the European Union. The ECPD plans to intensify its institutional activities for the promotion of peace, development and national reconciliation in the region.

The conference was immediately followed by the Third ECPD Youth Forum on **"Culture of Peace: Youth as Peacebuilders"** on 25-26 October 2015, with over 90 participants, including many youth from around the region, and more than 20 presentations. The keynote speaker was again Federico Mayor, former Director-General of UNESCO and President of the Culture of Peace Foundation. Arthur Dahl moderated the second and third plenary sessions on "peacebuilding knowledge, attitudes and skills", and "youth - actors of today, peace leaders of tomorrow", where a number of youth presented their actions for peace on the ground in the Balkans, with Syrian refugees in Jordan, and with asylum-seekers, among others. Arthur also contributed to the final discussions and conclusions, with reference to his paper at the previous youth forum on "Hope for Balkan Youth in the Contemporary World Reality" (<http://iefworld.org/ddahl14g>) recently published by EPCD.

Sustainable Development Goals in Europe

The European Economic and Social Committee, the United Nations Environment Programme and the European Environmental Bureau organized a conference on 12-13 November in Brussels, Belgium, on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their implementation in Europe: Opportunities for Engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders. IEF President Arthur Dahl was invited to present his work on the challenges that the SDGs represent for Europe and the potential role that Europe can play in implementing the new 2030 Agenda adopted in September by the United Nations.

The paper is available on the IEF web site at <http://iefworld.org/ddahl15g>

Local Governments and the Sharing Economy

Free webinar Tues 24 November

I am pleased to announce the release of the Local Governments and the Sharing Economy (LGSE) roadmap which explores the question: How can cities strategically engage with the Sharing Economy to advance *sustainability*?

The summary (36 pages), full report (216 pages in English) or individual chapters can be downloaded at: [LocalGovSharingEcon.com](http://www.localgovsharingecon.com) <<http://www.localgovsharingecon.com/>>.

There are three key messages in the Local Governments and the Sharing Economy roadmap:

1. The Sharing Economy is not inherently sustainable but cities can help to make it more so.
2. Community sharing is a promising area where local governments can play proactive, enabling roles.
3. Addressing data gaps is critical for understanding sustainability impacts on cities.

To learn about Roadmap highlights sign up to our free one hour webinar with the lead authors Rosemary Cooper and myself from One Earth: Tue 24 Nov at 10am PST / 1pm EST. Please RSVP through Eventbrite here <<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/local-governments-and-the-sharing-economy-roadmap-webinar-tickets-14034971979>>.

The LGSE roadmap analyzes shared mobility, spaces, goods and community sharing - and, to a lighter degree, shared food and energy - using a six-part sustainability filter.

- Discover what cities are doing to lead the way including Montréal, Austin, Vancouver, Portland and Toronto.
- Find out if carsharing, co-working spaces, clothing swaps and other Sharing Economy activities reduce the ecological footprints of cities, and increase social connection, equity and resilience.
- Learn about recommendations and roles for local governments to harness the Sharing Economy to strategically advance sustainability.
- Explore our analysis of Sharing Economy actors from community innovators to for-profit players (e.g., Airbnb and Uber) to the public sector.

This roadmap was developed and written by One Earth supported by a grant from The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation as part of the Cities for People initiative. The One Earth team is grateful to our expert advisors and the advisory committee of eight Canadian and US member cities of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network.

You can read more including an excerpt from the roadmap in our blog post:

<http://citiesforpeople.ca/en/news/sharing-economy-strategies-for-local-governments-to-create-better-cities>

Please feel welcome you to share this roadmap and our webinar with your networks and colleagues. For those of you on twitter, you can adapt the sample tweets below and you can also include graphics from the report (download here <<http://www.localgovsharingecon.com/graphics-and-logos.html>>). Let us know about your outreach too. I welcome your thoughts and questions.

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About One Earth: <http://www.oneearthweb.org>

One Earth is a Vancouver-based non-profit organization focused on shifting to sustainable consumption and production across scales. From 2013 – 2015, One Earth was the curator for the New Economies theme of Canada-wide Cities for People, initiated by The J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. Cities for People was an experiment in collaborative action to create more resilient and livable cities. One Earth is a co-founder of the Global Research Forum on Sustainable Production and Consumption and the North American Roundtable

on Sustainable Production and Consumption. One Earth is also catalyzing Disruptive Imaginings: creating better futures – a global initiative aimed at producing positive and compelling visions of life in sustainable futures.

Sample Tweets:

- #localgov can get strategic about #sharingeconomy to reduce footprints, promote equity + more. Explore new Roadmap <http://bit.ly/1kpInaZ> <<http://bit.ly/1kpInaZ>>
- #localgov can enable community #sharingeconomy like tool libraries for greener, connected communities. Read more <http://bit.ly/1P8zdNr> <<http://bit.ly/1P8zdNr>>.
- Many benefits to community #sharingeconomy for #cities – protect #climate, #affordability + connection, #wkdev. See <http://bit.ly/1P8zdNr> <<http://bit.ly/1P8zdNr>>
- #sharedmobility - opportunity or distraction for more #sustainable and equitable transportation? Answers for #localgov in new report: <http://bit.ly/1OnCOHe> <<http://bit.ly/1OnCOHe>>
- New report @oneearthweb on the #sharingeconomy and how local governments can engage with it to advance #sustainability: <http://bit.ly/1kpInaZ> <<http://bit.ly/1kpInaZ>>
- Understanding impacts of #sharingeconomy on #cities key for #localgov. Ideas to address data gap in new report <http://bit.ly/1MGJz6Y> <<http://bit.ly/1MGJz6Y>>

Rapid, Climate-Informed Development Needed to Keep Climate Change from Pushing More than 100 Million People into Poverty by 2030

<http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/11/08/rapid-climate-informed-development-needed-to-keep-climate-change-from-pushing-more-than-100-million-people-into-poverty-by-2030>

November 8, 2015

John, Roome, Senior Director for Climate Change at the World Bank Group



A new World Bank report shows that climate change is an acute threat to poorer people across the world, with the power to push more than 100 million people back into poverty over the next fifteen years. And the poorest regions of the world – Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – will be hit the hardest.

But the report – *Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty* – also points to a way out. This requires that poverty reduction and development work continue as a priority while taking into account a changing climate. It also means taking targeted action to help people cope with climate shocks – such as developing early warning systems and flood protection, and introducing heat-resistant crops. At the same time, efforts to reduce emissions should accelerate, and be designed to protect the poor.

"We have the ability to end extreme poverty even in the face of climate change, but to succeed, climate considerations will need to be integrated into development work. And we will need to act fast, because as climate impacts increase, so will the difficulty and cost of eradicating poverty. "

Climate impacts will affect agriculture the most, a key sector in the poorest countries and major source of income, food security, nutrition, jobs, livelihoods and export earnings. By 2030, crop yield losses could mean that food prices would be 12 percent higher on average in Sub-Saharan Africa. The strain on poor households, who spend as much as 60 percent of their income on food, could be acute. The resulting malnutrition could lead to an increase in severe stunting in Africa of 23 percent.

At the global level, warming of 2-3°C could increase the number of people at risk for malaria by up to 5 percent, or more than 150 million more people affected. Diarrhea would be more prevalent, and increased water scarcity would have an effect on water quality and hygiene.

The result would be an estimated 48,000 additional deaths among children under the age of 15 resulting from diarrheal illness by 2030.

To prevent this grim picture becoming reality, the report prescribes “good” development that is rapid, inclusive and climate-informed. This includes continuing and expanding programs that reduce poverty while increasing people’s capacity to prepare for and cope with shocks. For instance, in Kenya, the Hunger Safety Net Program prevented a five percent increase in poverty among beneficiaries following the 2011 drought.

These efforts will need to be coupled with targeted climate adaptation measures, such as protective infrastructure like dikes and drainage systems and mangrove restoration to deal with flooding, changing land-use regulations to account for sea level rise, disaster preparedness, and introduction of climate-resistant crops and livestock breeds.

In Uganda, the combination of new crop varieties and extension visits increased household agricultural income by 16 percent.

The report looks at different scenarios to 2030 and finds without good development more than 100 million additional people would be living in poverty. In India alone, an additional 45 million people could be pushed back over the poverty line by 2030, primarily due to agricultural shocks and increased incidence of disease.

“The report demonstrates that ending poverty and fighting climate change cannot be done in isolation – the two will be much more easily achieved if they are addressed together,” said **Stephane Hallegatte, a senior economist at the World Bank who led the team that prepared the report.** *“And between now and 2030, good, climate-informed development gives us the best chance we have of warding off increases in poverty due to climate change.”*

In the longer term, only immediate and continued efforts to reduce global emissions will save poor people from climate impacts, according to the report. To be successful, governments should design mitigation policies so that they protect, and even benefit, poor people. And action can be taken to reduce the burden of policies that would impose new costs – such as by strengthening social protection and assistance, or using cash transfers.

One analysis of 20 developing countries showed that collecting and redistributing energy taxes would benefit poor people despite higher energy prices, with the bottom 20 percent of the population experiencing a net \$13 gain for each \$100 of additional tax. Well-designed emissions-reductions programs that strengthen the productivity of agriculture and protect ecosystems could benefit 20-50 million low-income households by 2030 through payments for ecosystem services.

The report argues that in the poorest countries, domestic resources may be insufficient to put in place such measures, and international support will be essential. This is particularly true for investments that involve high immediate costs but are urgently needed to prevent lock-ins into carbon-intensive patterns, such as for urban transport, energy infrastructure, or deforestation.

Shock Waves: Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty differs from previous efforts by looking at the poverty impacts of climate change at the household level, rather than at the level of national economies. The report combines the findings from household surveys in 92 countries that describe demographic structures and income sources with the most recent modeling results on the impacts of climate change on agriculture productivity and food prices, natural hazards such as heat waves, flood and drought, and climate-sensitive diseases and other health consequences.

Funding for the report came from the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID).

Raising the Bar on Corporate Sustainability Reporting to Meet Ecological Challenges Globally

<http://www.unep.org/newscentre/Default.aspx?DocumentID=26854&ArticleID=35553&l=en>

Thu, Nov 12, 2015

A new UNEP Report urges companies to align their sustainability performance and reporting to match expectations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Paris, 12 November 2015 - Companies are failing to accurately reflect the scale and extent of their environmental impacts, a new report from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has found.

In the case of greenhouse gas emissions, only 9 out of 108 (8 per cent) surveyed companies have established reduction targets in accordance with the science-based target of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius - the central goal of the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, December 2015.

Download Full Report

Launched today at the [Reporting 3.0 Conference](#) in Berlin, Germany, the report, *Raising the Bar - Advancing Environmental Disclosure in Sustainability Reporting*, calls on companies to do more to address the environmental and social impacts of their operations, as required in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#).

UNEP's analysis of 108 company sustainability reports found that they typically disclose data on four key areas:

- Greenhouse Gas Emissions (reported by 95 per cent of surveyed companies);
- Energy (83 per cent);
- Water (81 per cent);
- Materials/Waste (75 per cent).

However, the quality of these reports is insufficient to represent the full impacts of a company's use of resources and materials on the environment and on communities. Such information would improve corporate decision-making and add value to businesses in the short and long terms.

"Corporate sustainability reporting needs to be rapidly elevated from focusing on incremental, isolated improvements to corporate environmental impacts," said Arab Hoballah, Chief of UNEP's Sustainable Cities and Lifestyles Branch. "It should instead serve to catalyze business operations along value chains to achieve the kind of transformative change necessary to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals and objectives by 2030. This is precisely what is needed to encourage countries and companies to act effectively at their respective levels."

The report urges more action and accountability, especially when addressing water and resources use, which may also unlock other possible emissions sources in value chains. It also calls for companies to set sustainability goals based on science-based targets.

According to the report, the key challenges in quality sustainability reporting are:

- The need for harmonizing and strengthening of materiality determination, and assurance methodologies.
- The need for greater collaborative reporting, through more engagement with upstream value chains (e.g. suppliers) and downstream stakeholders, to transform sustainability reporting from the current

one-way, broadcast-type format to a more multi-directional, dynamic, ongoing exchange with all relevant stakeholders.

- An alarming under-use of the sustainability context principle - placing performance of a company in the context of the limits and demands on environmental or social resources.

Brigitte Burnett, Head of Sustainability at Nedbank, one of the companies surveyed in the research, said: "Nedbank's *Fair Share 2030* strategy - and how we report on it - considers the impact of our lending practices within the broader socio-economic and environmental operating context. We believe this approach aligns with Global Reporting Initiative's (GRI) *Sustainability Context Principle*, as spotlighted in UNEP's Raising the Bar report.

"We find that a context-based approach to strategy development greatly enhances our ability to identify innovative funding opportunities and new markets. Through this, we are able to align the interests of our business with our clients and society at large, thereby helping to create a thriving future for all."

The report also identifies four key stakeholder constituencies with the largest influence over the quality of sustainability reporting:

- Long-term investors;
- Stock exchanges;
- Governments;
- Companies collaborating with their value chains.

"Investors rely on robust, accurate, contextualized and comparable information on company sustainability performance," said Ole Buhl, Head of Environment, Social & Governance at Arbejdsmarkedets Tillægspension (ATP). "The UNEP *Raising the Bar* report demonstrates the distance still needed to travel before sustainability reporting fits the bill on all these fronts.

"Investors have a wide diversity of disclosure needs to inform their decisions that are currently met only sporadically, so we are eager for reporting that more consistently and comprehensively meets investor and stakeholder needs."

Civil society and non-governmental organizations, although not part of the research, are recognized as those stakeholders who can strongly influence the quality of corporate-level sustainability reporting.

Gine Zwart, Senior Policy Advisor at Oxfam Novib, said, "This report shows the importance of raising the bar on corporate sustainability reporting. It is in the best interests of companies to make these reports meet high standards of consistent quality that cover material issues core to the business and its stakeholders.

"For organizations like Oxfam, this is also an essential requirement to come to collaboration between companies and civil society organization to reach the sustainable outcomes we all want to see."

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