



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
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Website
 Article submission
 Secretariat Email
 President Email
 Postal address

www.iefworld.org
newsletter@iefworld.org
ief@iefworld.org
ief@iefworld.org
 12B Chemin de Maisonneuve, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

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Christine Muller, General Secretary
 Arthur Lyon Dahl Ph.D.
 12B Chemin de Maisonneuve, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

From the Editor, Request for information for upcoming newsletters

This newsletter is an opportunity for IEF members to share their experiences, activities, and initiatives that are taking place at the community level on 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.

Members Corner

Welcome

We warmly welcome the following new members and associates to the International Environment Forum:

New Members

Behnam Missaghi, Australia
 Afsaneh Angelina Rafii, United Kingdom

New Associates

Rupa, Manchester, United Kingdom
 Cedric Åkermark, Sweden
 Kirsten Marie Møller-Sørensen, Denmark
 Bakirya Judith, Uganda
 Yakubu Hamza, Nigeria
 Ibrahim Shittu, Nigeria

Tanvi Hussain, India
 Dr. Atin Kumar, India
 Samuel Ogbonna Akuma, Nigeria
 Lawal Mutalib Tunde, Nigeria
 Rutvik Maheshbhai Vaghasiya, India
 Jiata Ugwah Ekele, Nigeria
 Olatunji Oni, Nigeria
 Simphiwe Cornelius Myeza, South Africa
 Adedayo Oladipo Ayegbokiki, Nigeria
 Bamigbade Gafar Babatunde, Nigeria

We look forward to getting to know you better and invite your active participation with IEF!

IEF Lecture Series

The International Environment Forum organized its first webinar on 6 December, with IEF President Arthur Dahl speaking on **Global Governance and Sustainability**.

You can listen to a **recording at** https://youtu.be/b5caXBN_lck

The **full text** of the paper is available [here](#).

His **PowerPoint presentation** with the main content can be downloaded [here](#).

Exploring Barriers to Justice and Sustainability in Economic Systems: Discussion on Root Causes and Potential Remedies with Joachim Monkelbaan

Saturday, January 23rd 2021,

10am PST California
1pm EST New York

18:00 GMT
19:00 CET Central Europe
23:30 IST India

To register for this webinar, go here:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/JUUpcuioPiMiGtemIFpG5XAHtHoD9RXffPeZ>

Description:

We are at a critical juncture as we face a growing number of global challenges that we can remedy if we act boldly and in unity. Many of those challenges, including climate change and inequality, have economic root causes. On this basis, the questions at the heart of this piece are the following:

- Which challenges is the world facing?
- What are the root causes of those challenges?
- What could be some remedies for addressing the root causes (including concepts such as circular economy, doughnut economics, green deals, and indicators of success that go beyond GDP)?; and
- What opportunities does the pandemic and its aftermath offer for making the economic systems more just, sustainable, and resilient?

Speaker Bio:

Joachim Monkelbaan is Representative for Sustainable and Just Economic Systems at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) Geneva. He lectures on sustainability governance at International University in Geneva. Previously, Joachim has worked with organizations such as UN Environment (Economics and Trade Branch), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development (ICTSD), WHO, and Climate-KIC. He was a team leader for several Sustainability Impact Assessments of trade agreements for the European Commission (DG Trade). He did postdoctoral research at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) and at the Institute for Developing Economies (IDE) in Tokyo, Japan. His book on governance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is available now. He holds a Ph.D in governance for sustainable development from the University of Geneva and Master's Degrees from the World Trade Institute and Maastricht University.

Building Capacity in Undergraduate Engineering Students to Deal with Climate Change with Rafael Amaral Shayani

Saturday, February 20th 2021, 19:00 CET

Mark your calendar! You will find more information about this lecture in the January newsletter.

To register, go here: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlrdumsqjgtE9yKpii8a3NpgizRI7vyz1vm>



The Spirituality of Climate Change

On 3 December 2020, the Baha'i Blogcast with Rainn Wilson released a video Episode 59: **The Spirituality of Climate Change**, featuring IEF members Arthur Dahl, Christine Muller, and Afsaneh Angelina Rafii, as well as an [audio blog](#) (1 hour 8 minutes).



Faith for Nature: Our Sacred Commitment

Participants convened at the [Faith for Earth Conference](#) have prepared a declaration communicating a commitment of faith-based organizations around the world towards taking actions that protect and restore nature.

The declaration calls for the creation of a Faith for Earth Coalition—in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme – to enable faith groups to promote action and influence policy choices at the local, national, regional and international levels.

You can read the excellent two-page [declaration “Our Sacred Commitment” here](#).



It's time to make peace with nature

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, address at Columbia University

2 December 2020

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Secretary-General António Guterres (left) discusses the State of the Planet with Professor Maureen Raymo at Columbia University in New York City.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, has described the fight against the climate crisis as the top priority for the 21st Century, in a passionate, uncompromising speech delivered on Wednesday at Columbia University in New York.

The landmark [address](#) marks the beginning of a month of UN-led climate action, which includes the release of major reports on the global climate and fossil fuel production, culminating in a climate summit on 12 December, the fifth anniversary of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement.

Nature always strikes back

Mr. Guterres began with a litany of the many ways in which nature is reacting, with “growing force and fury”, to humanity’s mishandling of the environment, which has seen a collapse in biodiversity, spreading deserts, and oceans reaching record temperatures.

The link between COVID-19 and man-made climate change was also made plain by the UN chief, who noted that the continued encroachment of people and livestock into animal habitats, risks exposing us to more deadly diseases.

And, whilst the economic slowdown resulting from the pandemic has temporarily slowed emissions of harmful greenhouse gases, levels of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane are still rising, with the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere at a record high. Despite this worrying trend, fossil fuel production – responsible for a significant proportion of greenhouse gases – is predicted to continue on an upward path.

‘Time to flick the green switch’

The appropriate global response, said the Secretary-General, is a transformation of the world economy, flicking the “green switch” and building a sustainable system driven by renewable energy, green jobs and a resilient future.

One way to achieve this vision, is by achieving net zero emissions. There are encouraging signs on this front, with several developed countries, including the UK, Japan and China, committing to the goal over the next few decades.

Mr. Guterres called on all countries, cities and businesses to target 2050 as the date by which they achieve carbon neutrality – to at least halt national increases in emissions - and for all individuals to do their part.

With the cost of renewable energy continuing to fall, this transition makes economic sense, and will lead to a net creation of 18 million jobs over the next 10 years. Nevertheless, the UN chief pointed out, the G20, the world’s largest economies, are planning to spend 50 per cent more on sectors linked to fossil fuel production and consumption, than on low-carbon energy.

Put a price on carbon

For years, many climate experts and activists have called for the cost of carbon-based pollution to be factored into the price of fossil fuels, a step that Mr. Guterres said would provide certainty and confidence for the private and financial sectors.

Companies, he declared, need to adjust their business models, ensuring that finance is directed

to the green economy, and pension funds, which manage some \$32 trillion in assets, need to step and invest in carbon-free portfolios.

Far more money, continued the Secretary-General, needs to be invested in adapting to the changing climate, which is hindering the UN's work on disaster risk reduction. The international community, he said, has "both a moral imperative and a clear economic case, for supporting developing countries to adapt and build resilience to current and future climate impacts".

Everything is interlinked

The COVID-19 pandemic put paid to many plans, including the UN's ambitious plan to make 2020 the "super year" for buttressing the natural world. That ambition has now been shifted to 2021, and will involve a number of major climate-related international commitments.

These include the development of a plan to halt the biodiversity crisis; an Oceans Conference to protect

marine environments; a global sustainable transport conference; and the first Food Systems Summit, aimed at transforming global food production and consumption.

Mr. Guterres ended his speech on a note of hope, amid the prospect of a new, more sustainable world in which mindsets are shifting, to take into account the importance of reducing each individual's carbon footprint.

Far from looking to return to "normal", a world of inequality, injustice and "heedless dominion over the Earth", the next step, said the Secretary-General, should be towards a safer, more sustainable and equitable path, and for mankind to rethink our relationship with the natural world – and with each other.

Source: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/12/1079032>

You can read the full speech [here](#), and in multiple languages on the UN site [here](#).

Scientists' Warnings: Affluence

Blog by Arthur Dahl

After a "World Scientists' Warning to Humanity in 1992, the Alliance of World Scientists (<https://scientistswarning.forestry.oregonstate.edu/>) issued a "World Scientists' Warning: Second Notice" in 2017, and a "Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency" in 2019 (<https://www.scientistswarning.org/>). Now they are collecting scientific papers with a narrow focus on specific aspects of the climate emergency (<https://www.scientistswarning.org/journal-articles-of-scientists-warnin...>).

A particularly important new paper recently published in *Nature Communications* is **Scientists' Warning on Affluence** by Thomas Wiedmann et al. (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-020-16941-y>) that demonstrates that the most significant driver of unsustainability is the high-consumption lifestyle associated with wealth and affluence, and is not compensated by technological innovations of the green economy. There is no way that we can turn the corner towards a more environmentally and socially sustainable society and avoid the climate and biodiversity catastrophes without a significant reduction in consumer lifestyles and an associated reduction in the GDP of Western economies, with all the implications for job losses and structural changes in the present economic paradigm. The paper reviews the extensive academic literature on alternatives and suggests important questions requiring further research. It emphasizes rethinking communities from the bottom up and promoting simplicity in material lifestyles much in keeping with Baha'i principles.

Ecocide to be defined

An expert drafting panel is to prepare a legal definition of "ecocide" as a potential international crime that could sit alongside War Crimes, Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity, in the context of a new global threat: the climate and biodiversity crisis. Launching with preparatory work this month, and set to draft the definition over the early months of 2021, the panel has been convened by the Stop Ecocide Foundation on the request of interested parliamentarians from governing parties in Sweden.

The concept of criminalising mass damage and destruction of ecosystems or “ecocide” at a global level has been steadily gaining traction in recent months since small island states Vanuatu and the Maldives called for “serious consideration” of it at the International Criminal Court’s annual Assembly of States Parties in December last year. President Macron of France has actively promised to champion the idea and the newly formed Belgian government has pledged diplomatic action to support it. Now an impressive list of top international and environmental lawyers will be tackling how best to define it. The co-chairs of the panel are international lawyer Philippe Sands QC, a leading specialist on international public and environmental law, and Justice Florence Mumba, a judge at the ECCC (Khmer Rouge Tribunal) and former Supreme Court judge in Zambia.

The aim is to harness the power of international criminal law to protect our global environment. Seventy five years ago, ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘genocide’ were first defined in Nuremberg. The panel will draw on experience since that day to forge a definition that is practical, effective and sustainable, and that might attract support to allow an amendment to the ICC Statute to be made. An international crime of ecocide could allow individual/State responsibility to be regulated to achieve balance for the survival of both humanity and nature. There have been working definitions of ‘ecocide’ over the years and the general concept - of mass damage and destruction of ecosystems - is reasonably well understood. The text that emerges over the coming months to be proposed at the ICC must be both clear and legally robust. There is now a recognition in the legal world that Ecocide can, and perhaps should, be considered alongside Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity as one of the ‘most serious crimes of concern to humanity as a whole’.

Source: based on Stop Ecocide press release of 17 November 2020: <https://www.stopecocide.earth/press-releases-summary/top-international-...>

Doha Forum Report 2020

Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty

“The pandemic has illustrated beyond dispute the gaps in our multilateral system. As countries go in different directions, the virus goes in every direction ... We urgently need multilateral institutions that can act decisively, based on global consent, for the global good.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres (Briefing to the Security Council on Global Governance Post-COVID-19, September 24, 2020)

The Doha Forum Report in partnership with the Stimson Center released a new report on the theme *Coping with New and Old Crises: Global and Regional Cooperation in an Age of Epidemic Uncertainty*. Here are some excerpts from the Foreword and Executive Summary:

The report “considers the COVID-19 crisis in its totality—both the present humanitarian and political challenges and the longer-term social, economic, and environmental implications. Regrettably, the pandemic has also further jeopardized progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its agreed targets for expanding livelihood

opportunities, empowering women, expanding literacy, and increasing longevity.

“This report’s analysis and ideas aim to spur greater, and more open, discussion and debate on the role that global governance institutions and novel, public-private partnerships can have in seeking a recovery from the pandemic that is broad-based and durable, equitable, and green. It stresses the importance of updating our aging system of global governance, so that it may play a more effective role in that recovery, as well as dealing with the threat of runaway climate change. During the pandemic, the climate crisis continues to unfold and to accelerate.”

“A three-year (2021–23) global green recovery effort and complementary sequence of steps to renovate and upgrade our global and regional governance institutions have become imperative. Together, they represent a robust vision and strategy for building back better and greener. The recovery effort should address itself to four critical dimensions of global-national-local interaction:

- i) public health, human rights, and social protection;
- ii) economies that are robust, efficient, fair, and opportunity-building, both for entrepreneurs and for youth;
- iii) economic recovery that doubles as effective climate action; and
- iv) greater and more inclusive digital connectivity, worldwide.

“2020 has been a year of astounding disruption, with a dramatic loss in human life and with the world economy experiencing a severe downturn and only limited moves towards recovery. It has also been a year of unprecedented adaptation and solidarity. The pandemic’s devastating effects have started to shift the way we think about our economy, technology, and one another. Against this extraordinary backdrop, the United Nations celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary under the banner “The future we want, the UN we need.” Far from being a moment of celebration, the anniversary was an opportunity to engage in dialogue, reflect on the performance of the world body, discuss the relevance of multilateralism and

its foundational principles, and to explore new ideas for enhanced global cooperation.”

The report also proposes a *World Summit on Inclusive Global Governance* in September 2023. The proposal in itself may be a milestone in the development of humankind toward a just global governance and it reminds us of the [words of Baha'u'llah](#) expressed already 150 years ago:

The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world’s Great Peace amongst men.

Source: <https://www.platformglobalsecurityjusticegovernance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Doha-Forum-Report-Coping-New-and-Old-Crises.pdf>



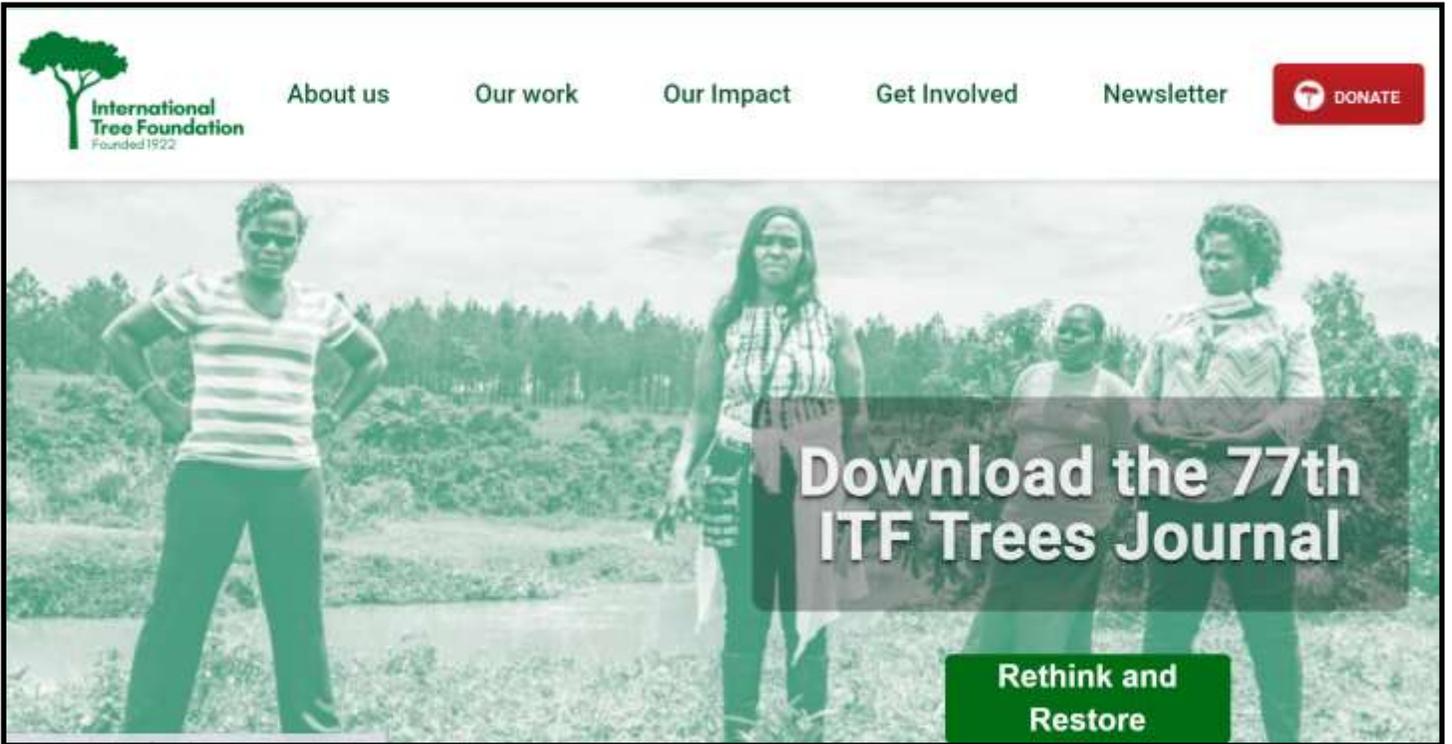
United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030

There has never been a more urgent need to restore damaged ecosystems than now. Ecosystems support all life on Earth. The healthier our ecosystems are, the healthier the planet - and its people.

On March 1, 2019, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2021–2030 to be the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Referred to as “The Decade,” this global effort aims to prevent degradation of ecosystems worldwide and to ensure health for people and nature. The Decade unites the world behind a common goal to restore forests, grasslands, croplands, wetlands, savannahs, other terrestrial to inland water ecosystems, marine and coastal ecosystems, and urban environments. Indigenous communities and religiously-based organizations already play a crucial role in promoting a culture of stewardship of nature and ecosystem restoration globally. Learn more about the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). Learn more about [Faith for Earth’s role in The Decade](#), and see resources for [faith-based organizations](#).

Sources: <https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/>

Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology December 2020 Newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/yale/forum-newsletter-december-2020?e=9934bcde2f>



Trees Journal by the International Tree Foundation

The International Tree Foundation (ITF, <https://www.internationaltreefoundation.org>) was founded as Men of the Trees (Watu wa Miti) in Kenya in 1922, ninety-eight years ago, by Richard St. Barbe Baker, an early environmentalist and Bahá'í. As Conservator of Forests in Kenya and Nigeria, St. Barbe saw the effects of deforestation and its implications for the environment and sustainability, beginning a life-long campaign to plant trees, halt desertification, and restore the planet's productivity. When he was sent to Palestine in the 1930s to restore that degraded land, Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, became the first life member of Men of the Trees, and he continued to support its World Forestry Charter Gatherings until the 1950s. The International Tree Foundation continues that tradition today, with major tree planting activities with local communities in England and Kenya, among others.

The ITF has just published the latest annual edition of its *Trees Journal*, issue 77 - Winter 2020, with a range of short but interesting articles about the soil and agroforestry, people and the importance of contact with nature and trees, including community forestry, and forest and landscape restoration. The authors include well-known names such as Roger Leakey and IEF member Paul Hanley, who has written two books about Richard St. Barbe Baker. The articles reflect both good science and accessible writing, and can be highly recommended to IEF members and their friends. The latest *Trees Journal* can be accessed at <https://internationaltreefoundation.org/treesjournal20>.