



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
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Christine Muller, General Secretary
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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.



LEADERS' PLEDGE FOR NATURE

United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development

We, political leaders participating in the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity, representing 64 countries from all regions and the European Union, have come together today, on 28 September 2020, ahead of the Summit to send a united signal to step up global ambition for biodiversity and to commit to matching our collective ambition for nature, climate and people with the scale of the crisis at hand.

We reaffirm our commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, based on unity, solidarity and trust among countries, peoples and generations, as the only way for the world to effectively respond to current and future global environmental crises.

We are in a state of planetary emergency: the interdependent crises of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation and climate change - driven in large part by unsustainable production and consumption - require urgent and immediate global action. Science clearly shows that biodiversity loss, land and ocean degradation, pollution, resource depletion and climate change are accelerating at an unprecedented rate. This acceleration is causing irreversible harm to our life support systems and aggravating poverty and inequalities as well as hunger and malnutrition. Unless halted and reversed with immediate effect, it will cause significant damage to global economic, social and political resilience and stability and will render achieving the Sustainable Development Goals impossible.

Leaders' Pledge for Nature
United to Reverse Biodiversity Loss by 2030 for Sustainable Development

Political leaders participating in the United Nations Summit on Biodiversity in September 2020, representing 81 countries from all regions and the European Union, have committed to reversing biodiversity loss by 2030. By doing so, these leaders are sending a united signal to step up global ambition and encourage others to match their collective ambition for nature, climate and people with the scale of the crisis at hand.

The International Environment Forum endorsed this Pledge for Nature as did many other civil society organizations.

Below is an excerpt from the Leaders' Pledge for Nature. We recommend reading the whole pledge

which contains a comprehensive and excellent action plan: (4 pages)

https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/Leaders_Pledge_for_Nature_27.09.20.pdf

Leaders' Pledge for Nature

"... We reaffirm our commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, based on unity, solidarity and trust among countries, peoples and generations, as the only way for the world to effectively respond to current and future global environmental crises.

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Biodiversity loss is both accelerated by climate change and at the same time exacerbates it, by debilitating nature's ability to sequester or store carbon and to adapt to climate change impacts. Ecosystem degradation, human encroachment in ecosystems, loss of natural habitats and biodiversity and the illegal wildlife trade can also increase the risk of emergence and spread of infectious diseases. COVID-19 shows that these diseases have dramatic impacts not only on loss of life and health but across all spheres of society.

Nature fundamentally underpins human health, wellbeing and prosperity. We need to appropriately value nature and the services it provides as we make decisions and recognize that the business

case for biodiversity is compelling. The benefits of restoring natural resources outweigh the costs tenfold, and the cost of inaction is even higher.

Despite ambitious global agreements and targets for the protection, sustainable use and restoration of biodiversity, and notwithstanding many local success stories, the global trends continue rapidly in the wrong direction. A transformative change is needed: we cannot simply carry on as before.

This Pledge is a recognition of this crisis and an expression of the need for a profound re-commitment from World leaders to take urgent action. Against the backdrop of COVID19, which has crippled the world's economies and pressured governments everywhere to begin the process of rebuilding and renewing, decisions made now will have ramifications for all of us and for generations to come.

We are committed to taking the necessary actions to achieve the vision of Living in Harmony with Nature by 2050. To put the world on the right track towards this long-term goal will require strong political will combined with real accountability and the appropriate legal, economic and financial tools and incentives. Everyone, governments, business and individuals, has a role to play. We must broaden and strengthen the movement for change.

We therefore commit to undertake the following urgent actions over the next ten years as part of the UN Decade of Action to achieve Sustainable Development and to put nature and biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030:"

To continue reading, go here:

https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/Leaders_Pledge_for_Nature_27.09.20.pdf

The latest information on the number of endorsements can be found at <https://www.leaderspledgefornature.org/>

Environment and Spirituality

A new course or workshop on the Bahá'í approach

IEF President Arthur Dahl created a workshop on *Environment and Spirituality* for the Swiss Baha'i Winter School, December 27 – 30, 2020. The materials are now available on the IEF website in both English and French, including the downloadable presentations as pdf files: https://iefworld.org/fr_environment_spiritualite

The workshop discusses the relationship between environment and spirituality. We are facing existential environmental crises like climate change and the collapse of biodiversity. These are scientific issues. What is the Bahá'í perspective on a complementary role for spirituality and religion in solving them?

The course consists of four units based in large part on the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

1. the environmental crisis and our lack of spirituality
2. spiritual reflections on our relationship with nature
3. social transformation – the role of spirituality
4. spiritual dimensions and practical actions, the environmental example of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the role of the individual

Sacred People Sacred Earth Global Day of Action, March 11, 2021



Sacred People Sacred Earth is the biggest-ever faith-climate justice day of action globally in support of the boldest-ever set of demands from diverse religious partners.

As a global, multi-faith, grassroots alliance, we stand for equity and compassion for all, and we deplore injustice. We know that we cannot afford to wait for governments and financial institutions to act first; we understand that change starts with us. We are organizing grassroots people of diverse religions in

support of the following demands, and we are leading by example. We call for:

1. 100% clean energy for all: Sustainable, affordable power for everyone - especially the 800 million people without access to electricity
2. Global finance aligned with compassionate values: Increased financing - in COVID recovery and beyond - for renewable energy and sustainable food systems
3. Jobs and healthcare for all: A just transition for workers, migrants, and communities impacted by climate change and the energy transition through healthcare, job training and placement, and other necessary support
4. Protect Indigenous rights: A strong defense for the legal rights of Indigenous communities and environmental protectors
5. Welcome for migrants: Generous hospitality and opportunities for climate and environmental refugees to migrate and establish new homes
6. No more climate pollution: Net-zero greenhouse gas emissions in wealthy countries by 2030; accelerated finance/technology transfers for global net zero before 2050
7. End the planet's desecration: No new fossil fuel exploration or infrastructure, industrial agriculture, or deforestation; no more habitat or biodiversity loss
8. Eliminate immoral finance: No further financing or COVID bailouts for all fossil fuels, industrial agriculture, or deforestation
9. Climate reparations from wealthy countries: Leadership by wealthy countries in climate financing and technology transfer, in recognition of these countries' colonialist and environmental debt
10. Bold faith community leadership: Sustained, united action guided by the teachings of our diverse religions, ushering in an equitable, peaceful life for all

We know that grassroots people of faith across the world are organizing for environmental justice and we believe that grassroots communities are ahead of our institutions and denominations in calling for bold climate solutions. That's why, on March 11, 2021, people of faith across the world will take action in support of these demands in a massive, grassroots, multi-faith global day of climate action- Sacred People, Sacred Earth. This day of action will be spearheaded by GreenFaith International, a new, global, grassroots, multi-faith climate justice alliance. We'll share the statement and bold demands that grassroots faith communities around the world have developed, and provide opportunities for people of diverse faiths and spiritualities everywhere to get involved.

Already we have over 100 high level faith leaders who have signed onto the statement and the list of supporters and actions is steadily growing.

There will be events all over the world on March 11, 2021. [Sign up to host an event here.](#)

Watch and Share the [Sacred People Sacred Earth Video](#) 4:29
Source: [GreenFaith](#)

Two Muslim Efforts to Save the Planet



Mizan

Earlier this year, the Faith for Earth Initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) launched a global push to bring together Islamic institutions from around the world in a bid to combat pollution, climate change and other threats to the planet. Called Mizan, Arabic for “balance”, the charter is designed to showcase Islam’s teachings on the environment and spur the world’s 1.8 billion Muslims to embrace sustainability as part of their everyday lives.

Iyad Abumoghli, director of the [Faith for Earth Initiative](#) said: The sacred scripture in the Quran, the practices of Prophet Muhammad and the teachings of Islam all urge humanity to value and protect nature. But those lessons are largely unknown to many Muslims, including how they relate to contemporary environmental issues, such as climate change, ecosystem destruction and overconsumption. Mizan is designed to change that – and encourage Muslims to do all they can to safeguard the planet.

Source: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-new-initiative-mobilizing-muslims-help-save-planet>

Forty Green Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on Environmental Justice & Sustainability

This compilation by Kori Majeed and Saarah Yasmin Latif, is a timely and welcome addition to the important on-going work of developing “green” Muslim attitudes and practices. Download at tiny.cc/40greenhadith

A Laudato Si’ Focus on Environmental Justice Webinar by the Catholic Climate Covenant

On **Thursday, January 21st at 2pm EST** (20:00 CET), the Catholic Climate Covenant will host the first of a two-part series on “A Laudato Si’ Focus on Environmental Justice.”

Webinar Speakers:

- [Dr. Catherine Wright, Associate Professor of Religion and Philosophy, Executive Director of [Collaborative for the Common Good](#), Wingate University
- [Veronica Coptis, Executive Director of the [Center for Coalfield Justice](#).

In this first part of the Laudato Si' Focus on Environmental Justice series, Dr. Catherine Wright will unpack the meaning of environmental justice and how Catholic Social Teaching (in particular Laudato Si') gives us a helpful lens to view and act on this timely issue. Veronica Coptis will present on her organization's collaboration with area residents living with the daily impacts of fossil fuel extraction to improve oversight of and accountability for fossil fuel extraction and use, and to protect public and environmental health. [Go here](#) to register for the webinar.

Human Development Report 2020

The Next Frontier - Human Development and the Anthropocene



Human Development Report 2020

The Next Frontier

Human Development and the Anthropocene

Thirty years ago, UNDP created a new way to conceive and measure progress. Instead of using growth in GDP as the sole measure of development, we ranked the world's countries by their human development: by whether people in each country have the freedom and opportunity to live the lives they value.

The 2020 Human Development Report (HDR) doubles down on the belief that people's agency and empowerment can bring about the action we need if we are to live in balance with the planet in a fairer world. It shows that we are at an unprecedented moment in history, in

which human activity has become a dominant force shaping the planet. These impacts interact with existing inequalities, threatening significant development reversals. Nothing short of a great transformation – in how we live, work and cooperate – is needed to change the path we are on. The Report explores how to jumpstart that transformation.

The climate crisis. Biodiversity collapse. Ocean acidification. The list is long and growing longer. So much so that many scientists believe that for the first time, instead of the planet shaping humans, humans are knowingly shaping the planet. This is the Anthropocene – the Age of Humans - a new geologic epoch.

Though humanity has achieved incredible progress, we have taken the Earth for granted, destabilizing the very systems upon which we rely for survival. Covid-19, which almost certainly sprang to humans from animals, offers a glimpse of our future, in which the strain on our planet mirrors the strain facing societies. It took Covid-19 very little time to expose and exploit overlapping inequalities, as well as weaknesses in social, economic, and political systems, and threaten reversals in human development.

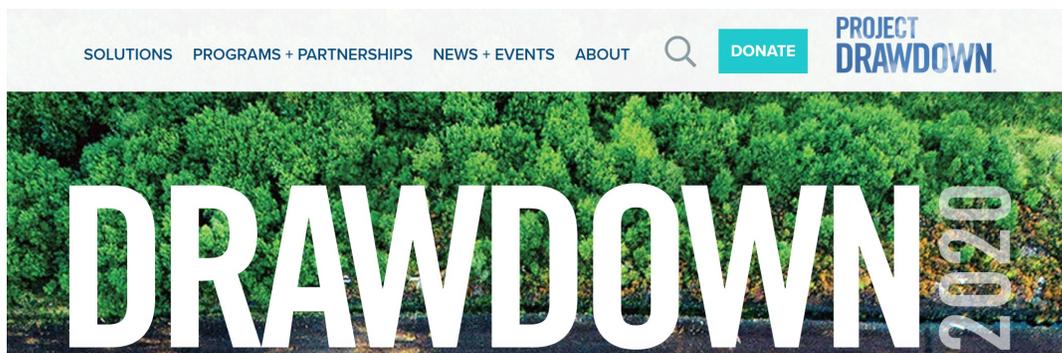
How should we react to this new age? Do we choose to strike out on bold new paths striving to continue human development while easing planetary pressures? Or do we choose to try—and ultimately fail—to go back to business as usual and be swept into a dangerous unknown?

This Human Development Report is firmly behind the first choice, and its arguments go beyond summarizing well-known lists of what can be done to achieve it.

Go here for excellent summaries with pictures and graphics and to download the report:
<http://report.hdr.undp.org/>

Source: <http://report.hdr.undp.org/intro.html>

Farming Our Way Out of the Climate Crisis New Report by the Project Drawdown



When we think of climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, we usually envision power plants, factories, cars, and smokestacks — not farms and ranches. But it turns out that agriculture and land use, as well as the larger global food system, are among the biggest contributors to climate change. And, as a result, changing these systems, can be an important source of climate solutions. But how can this be? Isn't climate change caused by burning fossil fuels that release carbon dioxide (CO₂) into the atmosphere? There's more to it than that.

You can find in depth coverage about the numerous climate actions we can take in the area of farming and land use in this comprehensive report by the Project Drawdown:

<https://drawdown.org/downloads?tca=7kcJDw6Pw--JZ852ds8YOWVhgaH0QXFCqN9xd63VCc>

Source: <https://drawdown.org/>

UN75 Initiative Presents Final Report

The UN75 Office has issued its [concluding report](#) on the issues that citizens around the world perceive as most pressing and their expectations of the UN over the next 25 years. The publication presents the key findings of the worldwide consultation conducted throughout 2020.

Interim findings of the consultation were presented at the high-level meeting to commemorate the UN's 75th anniversary on 21 September 2020. The concluding report updates those findings with results through 3 November 2020, and provides a collection of participants' recommendations of steps the UN could take to address global challenges.

The report titled, 'Shaping our future together: Listening to people's priorities for the future and their ideas for action,' summarizes findings on: priorities for recovering better from the pandemic; threats and challenges for 2045; long-term priorities for 'the future we want'; and views on international cooperation and the UN. It finds that "more environmental protection" is the number one long-term priority for respondents, globally, ranking in the top three priorities across all regions.

On the role of the UN, participants called for: moral leadership; a reformed, more representative and more agile UN Security Council; a revised Charter that includes climate change and other current global challenges; continued management and leadership reforms, including more inclusive hiring practices, more accountability and more transparency; an inclusive and participatory UN system, helping to improve citizens' understanding of the work of the UN; and improved implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of UN programmes globally, to solve international problems more effectively.

Source: IISD, SDG Knowledge Hub, 11 January, 2021

<http://sdg.iisd.org/news/un75-initiative-presents-final-report-enters-new-stage/>

A Plea for Urgent Action to Preserve Nature

Speech by EU President von der Leyen at the One Planet Summit

Recommended by IEF member Michael Richards
Brussels, 11 January 2021

It is fitting that we start this new year with a One Planet Summit in Paris talking about biodiversity. Because I believe 2021 will be the year when the world turns over a new leaf for our planet.

In a few months, the world will come together in Kunming: This COP15 for nature must be like the COP21 was for climate. And we need a Paris-style agreement to go with it. Ambitious, global and game changing. The stakes could not be higher and the imperative act could not be more compelling.

This is about sustainable development. Because thriving biodiversity can ensure access to food, water and energy for billions of people.

This is about equality. Because we know that the effects of nature loss disproportionately affect poorer and indigenous communities.

This is about our security. Because conflicts explode when more people grapple for less natural resources; and this is about our quality of life. Because we need nature in our lives for our physical and mental health.

We all know the scale and the urgency of the task ahead of us this year.

And we see the changes in our everyday lives: From more concrete blocks to less wilderness and wildlife to increasing temperatures and extreme weather.

These worrying changes are different sides of the same coin. In fact, they mutually reinforce each other.

When we lose forests, we don't 'just' lose green space or natural habitat. We lose a key ally in our fight against climate change. When temperatures rise and nature disappears, we suffer more natural disasters and zoonotic diseases.

We have spoken a lot about the links between biodiversity loss and COVID. But this is not the first,

last or even most telling example. Think of how one of the deadliest outbreaks of Ebola is thought to have started: with a young boy playing next to a tree in a remote village in Guinea. A tree that had been infested by bats who had been pushed towards the village because 80% of forests in the region had been destroyed. We know the tragic repercussions this had.

And if we don't urgently act to protect our nature, we may already be at the beginning of an era of pandemics. But we can do something about it. It needs concerted global action and local sustainable development.

And just as we cooperate for our 'One Planet' we need to work together for our 'One Health'. This is why we will prioritise research on 'One Health' across Horizon Europe.

And let me be clear: we will invest several hundred million euros over the next four years for research: on biodiversity, animal health, emerging diseases and much more.

It is why we will work closely with our international partners on research - in the spirit of the PREZODE initiative launched by France and Member States, which the European Commission welcomes.

And it is also why we will bolster and sponsor initiatives like the Africa-led Great Green Wall. I would like to congratulate the African Union - and all of the partners involved for bringing a decades-old dream to life. We have already seen the difference it can make, stretching from Senegal in the West to Djibouti in the East. It has helped restore 15 million hectares of degraded land in Ethiopia and supported farmers in Niger to produce enough grain to feed an extra 2.5 million people a year.

This is why I say today: We will mobilise even more than the €700 million per year already raised for the Great Green Wall project.

The more partners and the more Member States join and invest: the more we can do. This is the spirit of Team Europe and I am determined that we can do so much more working with our African partners.

This shows that turning over a new leaf for nature all comes down to local action and global ambition. This is why, with the European Green Deal, we are stepping up our own action and ambition - both locally and globally.

Our new Biodiversity and Farm to Fork Strategies will lead the way. They set out the EU's ambitions to protect 30% of land and sea areas - in Europe and around the world. They will help us restore damaged rivers and plant 3 billion trees by 2030. They will help bring back pollinators to agricultural lands and reduce the use and risk of harmful pesticides.

And the new, greener Common Agricultural Policy will help us protect livelihoods and food security - while we protect our nature and our climate.

But we know we need to do more. Being a major economy and trading superpower comes with responsibilities.

And it is our duty to ensure that our Single Market does not drive deforestation in local communities in other parts of the world. This is why, later this year, we will propose new legislation to minimise the risk of products linked to global deforestation being placed on the EU market.

Europe is ready to lead the way and I hope others will join us in that effort!

Source:

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_21_61