



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
Volume 23, Number 10 --- 15 October 2021

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

Article Deadline November 10

Christine Muller, General Secretary
Arthur Lyon Dahl Ph.D.
CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva,

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

IEF ANNUAL CONFERENCE 1 – 5 NOVEMBER

This year's IEF Conference will take place in connection with COP26 in the first week of November. Please, see the detailed conference information starting on p. 2.

Check out the IEF website for conference registration, available soon. IEF members and associates will also receive a special mailing with event registration.

IEF GENERAL ASSEMBLY 30 OCTOBER

The International Environment Forum Annual General Assembly will be held separately on **Saturday 30 October** at 17:00 CEST, 11:00 am EST. IEF members will receive a separate announcement about participation in the General Assembly and election of the Governing Board.

The IEF warmly welcomes the following new members and associates:

Members

Arhwin Kalai Chelvan, Malaysia
Yuvraj Shiralkar, India

Associates

Kombe Jonathan, Zambia
Robert S Moshrefzadeh, United States

25th Annual Conference of the International Environment Forum

In association with COP26
United Nations Climate Change Conference
Glasgow, Scotland, and online
1-5 November 2021

The 25th Annual Conference of the International Environment Forum is being held in association with the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26 on 1-5 November 2021 and in partnership with the Adora Foundation. It will include two hybrid events both online and in Glasgow, Scotland, and four events entirely online, reaching both participants at COP26 and those around the world interested in climate change, its impacts and possible responses.

Details of some events are still being finalized and are subject to change, but the dates, times and participants are confirmed. Registration information will be sent out later.

SCHEDULE

NOTE: Event times are given in GMT, the time in Glasgow. Since this is the week between Europe going off summer (daylight savings) time on 31 October and North America setting clocks back a week later, be sure to check the correct time for your time zone. For example, 7:00 pm GMT Glasgow is 20:00 CET Paris and 3:00 pm EST New York.

Monday 1 November 7 - 8:30pm (starting 3pm EST / 20:00 CET)

Health Equity and Climate Change

virtual event

Tuesday 2 November 3:00 - 5:00 pm (starting 11am EST / 16:00 CET)

Strengthening Global Climate Governance

hybrid event, both in Glasgow and virtual

Wednesday 3 November 7:30 pm (3:30pm EST, 20:30 CET)

Earth Reflections

event in Glasgow organized by Scotland Baha'is and Interfaith, with online participation

Thursday 4 November 4:30 - 6:00 pm (starting 12:30pm EST, 17:30 CET)

Biodiversity: Imagining a Positive Future for Nature and Culture

virtual event

Thursday 4 November 7:30 - 9:00 pm (starting 3:30pm EST, 20:30 CET)

Climate Change: Engineering the Future

virtual event

Friday 5 November 7:30 - 9:00 pm (starting 3:30pm EST, 20:30 CET)

Strategies for Climate Resilient Communities

virtual event

In addition, there will be an interfaith vigil for the success of COP26 on Sunday 31 October at 3:00 pm followed by workshops including one with IEF member Halldor Thorgeirsson at 5:30 pm.

Saturday 6 November is the Global Day of Action for COP26 with tree planting activities.

SUMMARY PROGRAMME

Health Equity and Climate Change

Monday 1 November 7:00-8:30 pm (starting 3pm EST / 20:00 CET)

The relationship between climate change, health and equity is tightly linked and one cannot talk about climate change without mentioning the other two. In this panel we will discuss how many of the factors that lead to climate change are often the same that impact health inequities.

Moderator:

Anisha Prabhu

Panelists:

Mojgan Sami: *A planetary perspective of health and climate change in the 21st century*

Farhang Tahzib: *Prescription for a healthy climate*

Gill Turner: *Impact of the climate emergency on children and young people's mental health*

Strengthening Global Climate Governance

Tuesday 2 November 3:00-5:00pm (starting 11am EST / 16:00 CET) hybrid event

While the 2015 Paris Agreement set important targets for climate change mitigation and adaptation, commitments are voluntary and implementation has fallen far short. Strengthened mechanisms of global climate governance are necessary to avoid or at least mitigate a climate catastrophe.

Moderator:

Joachim Monkelbaan

Panelists:

Maja Groff: *interim report of the Climate Governance Commission, "Governing our Climate Future"*

Arthur Dahl: *Bringing environmental governance to the global level*

Augusto Lopez-Claros: *Financing Instruments for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation*

Halldor Thorgeirsson: *Bringing the global home*

Avah Donnelly-Darling: *A Change in Thinking: A Youth Perspective on the Future of Global Governance*

Wendi Momen: *SDGs 5 + 13: Women and Girls + Climate Action*

Biodiversity: Imagining a Positive Future for Nature and Culture

Thursday 4 November 4:30-6:00 pm (starting 12:30pm EST, 17:30 CET)

Climate change and the biodiversity crisis are intimately linked, and both must be addressed together. In protecting fragile environments from the poles to the tropics, we can learn much from both indigenous peoples who have long lived in harmony with their environment, and from nature itself and its requirements for resilience.

Moderator:

Laurent Mesbah

Panelists:

Ilona Kater: *Impact of unpredictable weather conditions on humans and reindeer*

Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen: *Indigenous values and biodiversity*

Arthur Dahl: *The existential threat to coral reefs*

Climate Change: Engineering the Future

Thursday 4 November 7:30-9:00 pm (starting 3:30pm EST, 20:30 CET)

Technology is inseparable from climate change: it either accelerates it, or is indispensable to mitigating it. The difference lies in great measure in the choices engineers make. How do we ensure we make the right ones?

Moderator:

Lara Lewington

Panelists:

Phil Sturgeon: *Climate action in tech: what can a technologist do about climate change?*

Rafael Shayani: *Social innovation in engineering education: addressing climate change*

Helen Morley: *Creating collective engineering climate standards - for the good of all*

Ismael Velasco: *Software developers and climate action: the social mobilisation challenge*

Strategies for Climate Resilient Communities

Friday 5 November 7:30-9:00 pm (starting 3:30pm EST, 20:30 CET)

Communities worldwide will need to transform in a wide variety of ways in order to meet the demands of climate change. In this panel we will explore strategies concerning disaster preparedness and transportation systems.

Moderator:

Ana-Sofia Velasco, Campaigns Assistant, Scope; Project Coordinator, Adora Foundation (UK)

Panelists:

Laurence Farshid Bonner: *Transport justice - planning the 20 minute neighborhood*

Janot Mendler de Suarez: *Unity in diversity - can the first principle of biodiversity unleash the transformational power of communities?*

Willy Missack: *Community building without dependency*

Check the [IEF website](#) for up-dated information. Conference registration will be available soon. Everyone is invited to attend the IEF conference!

IEF Approach to Social Action

The International Environment Forum is a Baha'i-inspired professional scientific organization addressing the environment and sustainability, with international membership in over 75 countries. It focuses its work on participation in the discourse on the environment relating science and ethics with the aim of offering perspectives arising from the Bahá'í teachings and the experience of the community; and collaborating with organizations and individuals involved in this area of endeavour who are like-minded and open to such perspectives. At the same time, it encourages its members and associates to engage in social action at the local level and supports them in their efforts by providing them with relevant scientific information and a network of like-minded people.

The IEF recognizes the “centrality of knowledge to social existence,” as explained in the Ridván Message 2010 of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith:

The perpetuation of ignorance is a most grievous form of oppression; it reinforces the many walls of prejudice that stand as barriers to the realization of the oneness of humankind, at once the goal and operating principle of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. Access to knowledge is the right of every human being, and participation in its generation, application and diffusion a responsibility that all must shoulder in the great enterprise of building a prosperous world civilization—each individual according to his or her talents and abilities. Justice demands universal participation. Thus, while social action may involve the provision of goods and services in some form, its primary concern must be to build capacity within a given population to participate in creating a better world. Social change is not a project that one group of people carries out for the benefit of another.

From a Baha'i perspective, social action is initiated from the grassroots. It originates from a consultative process in which the reality of the local community is assessed – its social and

environmental problems as well as the human and material resources to address them. Scientific knowledge and practical skills, as well as insights in how to apply spiritual principles to social and environmental issues for community sustainability, are among the essential ingredients for social action. People become empowered by applying such knowledge and by learning from their experience, which they then can share with others.

IEF members and the general public can use the vast [resources on the IEF website](#) as well as the materials produced at the IEF Annual Conferences as sources of knowledge to assist them in their locally initiated social action. Members are also encouraged to share their experiences in environmental projects with others in the IEF newsletter, and as case studies on the website. Such experiences can include educational materials that were produced to address the needs in a local community or region.

In this spirit, for example, some IEF members recognized the lack of educational materials to assist youth immersed in a culture of materialism and consumerism. Therefore they created a 6-lesson [curriculum about the Story of Stuff](#) to help them apply spiritual principles to very practical actions in their lives which contribute to the protection of the environment as well as to the youth's personal spiritual development. These Baha'i-inspired materials were used with an interfaith youth group, refined after learning from the experience, and then posted on the IEF website. In such manner, others who also see a similar need for the youth in their community to turn away from consumerism can either use these materials as they are, or pick and choose from them to suit their specific local interests, needs, and circumstances.

A similar story is behind the interfaith study course [Scientific and Spiritual Dimensions of Climate Change](#) posted on the IEF website.

The IEF encourages its members from different parts of the world to share their experiences with social action in the area of the environment and sustainability. While the same spiritual principles are true everywhere, local environmental and social problems vary greatly, and different cultures will require different approaches to social action. Sharing your experiences and any educational materials you may have developed to address local needs will be inspiring and helpful for others.

Recently, the IEF became acutely aware of the tremendous need for knowledge about how to start projects with regenerative agriculture, especially in Africa. This is an important example of how the sharing of the experiences of a community could assist others in their local efforts. Is there a community who has had any experience with regenerative agriculture who could produce a toolkit from which other communities could get information, ideas, and inspiration?

A great need that is often overlooked at the local level is the protection of biodiversity. It would be wonderful if the IEF could share experiences of its members on how they were able to transform toxic chemical-laden monocultures into natural lawns, meadows, or community food gardens, or how they planted native trees and bushes to provide habitat for wildlife. Here, inspiration can be drawn from the IEF Statement [Ethical Commitment to Protect Nature and its Biodiversity](#) and some practical ideas are provided in [Environmentally Sustainable Baha'i Properties](#).

The IEF does not execute local actions, but aims to build capacity in its members and associates so that they can take meaningful actions in their community. The Universal House of Justice wrote in [The Prosperity of Humankind](#):

The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge, on the part of individuals and social organizations alike.

In closing, we wish all of our members, associates, and readers of these lines the very best in their effort to serve their community by protecting their environment! The Universal House of Justice wrote in its Naw-Ruz 2020 message:

May your minds be ever bent upon the needs of the communities to which you belong, the condition of the societies in which you live, and the welfare of the entire family of humanity, to whom you are all brothers and sisters.

Climate Change and Global Warming: A Bahá'í Perspective

Arthur Lyon Dahl (PhD)

Paper presented at "The Nexus between Climate Change, Faith & Science" webinar organized on 16 September 2021 by the All-Africa Conference of Churches
Baha'i International Community Addis-Ababa Office
United Religions Initiative

The Bahá'í Faith has been engaged for decades in public discourse about social justice and the environment, deeply rooted in the Bahá'í teachings. The Bahá'í International Community, its representative at the United Nations and other international organizations, has presented many statements on the issues, including climate change. Many individual Bahá'ís have also contributed professionally to the science and collaboration supporting climate action. Here is a brief summary of the Bahá'í perspective on climate change and global warming.

The Universal House of Justice, the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith, has written:

One of the most pressing problems of humanity in the current century is how a growing, rapidly developing, and not yet united global population can, in a just manner, live in harmony with the planet and its finite resources. Certain biological realities present themselves when an organism negatively affects or exceeds the capacity of its ecosystem. The limited availability and inequitable distribution of resources profoundly impact social relations within and between nations in many ways, even to the point of precipitating upheaval and war. And particular arrangements of human affairs can have devastating consequences for the environment. The question of the impact of climate change... is today a major aspect of this larger problem. The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh directly and indirectly touches on a range of such concerns in a manner that speaks to a harmony between society and the natural world.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017)

The founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892) wrote about how Divine attributes are reflected in the natural world:

Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world.
(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 142)

His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921) said much the same:

When... thou dost contemplate the innermost essence of all things, and the individuality of each, thou wilt behold the signs of thy Lord's mercy in every created thing, and see the spreading rays of His Names and Attributes throughout all the realm of being.
('Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 41-42)

...co-operation, mutual aid and reciprocity are essential characteristics in the unified body of the world of being, inasmuch as all created things are closely related together and each is influenced by the other or deriveth benefit therefrom, either directly or indirectly.
('Abdu'l-Bahá, in Compilation on Social and Economic Development, p. 12)

Bahá'u'lláh also warned about the excesses of material civilization:

The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men.
(Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CLXIV, p. 342-343)

Similarly, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, speaking on science and religion at Stanford University in 1912, said:

The elements and lower organisms are synchronized in the great plan of life. Shall man, infinitely above them in degree, be antagonistic and a destroyer of that perfection?
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, talk at Leland Stanford Junior University, Palo Alto, California, 8 October 1912. Promulgation of Universal Peace. Wilmette, Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982. p. 350)

The present destruction of our planetary environment for short-term material gain is clearly contrary to the divine will, and our consumer culture driving climate change is far from the human purpose and ethical values at the heart of all our faiths.

The Universal House of Justice as written:

Consumer culture, today’s inheritor by default of materialism’s gospel of human betterment, is unembarrassed by the ephemeral nature of the goals that inspire it. For the small minority of people who can afford them, the benefits it offers are immediate, and the rationale unapologetic. Emboldened by the breakdown of traditional morality, the advance of the new creed is essentially no more than the triumph of animal impulse, as instinctive and blind as appetite, released at long last from the restraints of supernatural sanctions.... Tendencies once universally castigated as moral failings mutate into necessities of social progress. Selfishness becomes a prized commercial resource; falsehood reinvents itself as public information.... Under appropriate euphemisms, greed, lust, indolence, pride - even violence - acquire not merely broad acceptance but social and economic value.
(Universal House of Justice, One Common Faith, 2005, p. 10)

Having penetrated and captured all significant centres of power and information at the global level, dogmatic materialism ensured that no competing voices would retain the ability to challenge projects of world wide economic exploitation.
(Universal House of Justice, One Common Faith, 2005, p. 5)

This is what we are up against as we try to transform our society towards climate justice and sustainability, and this is where our faiths can have an important influence. All our faiths talk about contentment, simplicity and detachment.

Take from this world only to the measure of your needs, and forego that which exceedeth them.

(Bahá’u’lláh, Súriy-i-Mulúk §19, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 193. Haifa, Bahá’í World Centre, 2002)

In its statement to the Paris Climate Change Conference in 2015, the Bahá’í International Community wrote:

Anthropogenic climate change is not inevitable; humanity chooses its relationships with the natural world.... The current global order has often approached the natural world as a reservoir of material resources to be exploited. The grave consequences of this paradigm have become all too apparent, and more balanced relationships among the peoples of the world and the planet are clearly needed. The question today is how new patterns of action and interaction can best be established, both individually and collectively, through personal choices, social systems, and governing institutions.

A more balanced attitude toward the environment must therefore address human conditions as consciously as it does natural ones. It must be embodied in social norms and patterns of action characterized by justice and equity. On this foundation can be built an evolving vision of our common future together. And that vision, in turn, stands as a powerful mechanism for mobilizing action around the world....

Setting humanity on a more sustainable path to the future involves transformation in attitudes and actions.... Establishing sustainable patterns of individual and collective life will therefore require not only new technologies, but also a new consciousness in human beings, including a new conception of ourselves and our place in the world.

From where will this consciousness arise? And where will the volition and self-discipline

needed to embody it in countless cities, towns, and villages be found? Qualities such as the capacity to sacrifice for the well-being of the whole, to trust and be trustworthy, to find contentment, to give freely and generously to others derive not from mere pragmatism or political expediency. Rather they arise from the deepest sources of human inspiration and motivation. In this, faith has shown itself to be key....

Of particular note is the role to be played by religious faith. 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.

Religion therefore offers a vital source of commitment to new and potentially challenging patterns of daily life. It is notable that religious leaders and faith-based organizations have been increasingly active on environmental and justice issues as they relate to climate change.... Identifying the spiritual principles at the root of ecological challenges can also be key in formulating effective action. Principles – that humanity constitutes but a single people, for example, or that justice demands universal participation in the work of sustainable development – reflect the rich complexity of human nature. Just as importantly, they help foster the will and the aspiration needed to facilitate the implementation of pragmatic measures. Identifying the principles underlying given issues and formulating action in light of their imperatives is therefore a methodology that all can benefit from and contribute to – those in traditionally religious roles, but also leaders of government, the corporate sector, civil society, and others involved in the formulation of public policy.

Exploring new patterns of interaction among the actors of society, such as individuals and institutions, will be central to the task of building more sustainable relationships with the natural world and among various segments of the global family. The work of addressing global climate change ultimately revolves around the aim of human lives well lived, which is a goal cherished by people and cultures the world over. In it can therefore be found a powerful point of unity to support the work ahead.

(Bahá'í International Community, Shared Vision, Shared Volition: Choosing Our Global Future Together, Statement to the Paris Climate Change Conference, November 2015)

While political and vested interests have tried to deny the existence of human-caused climate change, we have been advised:

Whenever Bahá'ís do participate in activities associated with this topic in the wider society, they can help to contribute to a constructive process by elevating the discourse above partisan concerns and self-interest to strive to achieve unity of thought and action.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017)

With reference to science and climate change, the Universal House of Justice advises:

Among the Bahá'í teachings are those concerning the importance of science. “Great indeed is the claim of scientists ... on the peoples of the world,” Bahá'u'lláh observed. ‘Abdu'l-Bahá wrote that the “sciences of today are bridges to reality” and repeatedly emphasized that “religion must be in conformity with science and reason.”

Scientific inquiry into the question of human contributions to global warming has gradually unfolded over a century of investigation.... Sound scientific results, obtained through the employment of sound scientific methods, produce knowledge that can be acted upon....

...the governments of nearly every country on earth have reached political consensus on a joint framework, in the Paris accord, to respond to climate change in a manner that is anticipated to evolve over time as experience accumulates. More than a century ago, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá referred to “unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed.” The recently adopted international agreement on climate change...

offers another noteworthy demonstration of that development anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The agreement represents a starting point for constructive thought and action that can be refined or revised on the basis of experience and new findings over time.

(Universal House of Justice, letter of 29 November 2017)

There is much that our faiths can do to empower people at the local level to take practical actions in response to climate change. In children's classes and youth activities, we can warn of the dangers of the materialistic consumer society that is trying to sell them endless material wants, and even addiction to social media for advertising purposes, while promoting alternative spiritual values and the satisfaction that comes from altruism and acts of service to others. They can learn love for nature and all the services it provides. In villages and neighbourhoods, we can help to build resilience to the effects of climate change, such as by planting trees to control erosion, hold water and support biodiversity. Each community can read its local reality and consult on the need for solidarity when faced with natural disasters, crop failures, drought, locusts, pandemics and other threats to local well-being. And we can all pray for the success of COP26. People need not feel helpless when faced with a global challenge like climate change, and faith can give them strength.

Faith Plans for People and Planet

The world's faiths are responding to the 'cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor' by developing Faith Plans for People and Planet – long-term faith commitments to use their buildings, lands, investments and influence to drive practical action to create a better world – for the benefit of people and planet, and for today's and future generations. The first plans were launched on 4 October 2021. Join the Movement!

Visit the website at <https://www.faithplans.org/>

Faith and Science: An Appeal for COP26

Faith leaders and leading scientists joined at the Vatican
to raise ambition ahead of COP26
From UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
4 October 2021

On 4 October 2021, faith leaders representing the world's major religions joined scientists at the Vatican to call on the international community to raise their ambition and step up their climate action ahead of COP26. Almost 40 faith leaders signed a joint Appeal, which was presented by Pope Francis to COP26 President-Designate, the Rt Hon Alok Sharma, and the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Luigi Di Maio.

Signatories include high-profile representatives from across the Christian denominations, both Sunni and Shi'a Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Zoroastrianism and Jainism – representing a broad range of faith leaders.

The Appeal:

- Calls for the world to achieve net-zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, to limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels;\
- Presses wealthier nations and those with the greatest responsibility to take the lead, stepping up their climate action at home and financially supporting vulnerable countries to adapt to and address climate change.\
- Urges governments to raise their ambition and their international cooperation to transition to clean energy and to sustainable land use practices, environmentally friendly food systems and responsible financing.

- Commits the faith leaders themselves to greater climate action. Notably, doing more to educate and influence members of their traditions and actively participating in the public debate on environmental issues. The faith leaders will also support action to green their community assets, such as properties and investments.

With the window narrowing to restore the planet, the faith leaders and scientists implored the international community to take speedy action, saying: 'Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden: we must not leave a desert to our children.' The Appeal follows months of dialogue, in which the faith leaders and scientists built a dialogue in a spirit of humility, responsibility and mutual respect to agree a common moral duty to tackle climate change.

The diversity of participants makes this a highly significant moment with the potential to have a powerful impact not only at COP26 but also on the estimated 84% of the world's population who identify with a faith.

COP26 President-Designate, Alok Sharma, said:

"I am honoured to receive this historic joint appeal as we press for progress towards limiting global temperature rises to 1.5C at COP26 in just a few weeks' time."

"We must all hear the voices of those most affected by climate change and I hope people of faith will continue to be a key part of this dialogue as we work together to drive forward climate action."

The full document: [Faith and Science: Towards COP26, Joint Appeal from the Vatican 4 October 2021](#), or on this website.

[Executive Summary](#), or right below.

Source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/holy-see-faith-and-science-an-appeal-for-cop26>

Faith and Science: Towards COP26 Joint Appeal

Executive Summary
4 October 2021

Today, after months of dialogue between faith leaders and scientists, we come together united to raise awareness of the unprecedented challenges that threaten our beautiful common home. Our faiths and spiritualities teach a duty to care for the human family and for the environment in which it lives. We are deeply interdependent with each other and with the natural world. We are not limitless masters of our planet and its resources. Multiple crises facing humanity are ultimately linked to a crisis of values, ethical and spiritual. We are caretakers of the natural environment with the vocation to care for it for future generations and the moral obligation to cooperate in the healing of the planet. We must address these challenges using the knowledge of science and the wisdom of religion. We must think long-term for the sake of the whole of humanity. Now is the time to take transformative action as a common response.

We need a framework of hope and courage. But we also need to change the narrative of development.

Climate change is a grave threat. We advocate for common but differentiated climate action at all levels.

The world is called to achieve net-zero carbon emissions as soon as possible, with wealthier countries taking the lead in reducing their own emissions and in financing emission reductions from poorer nations. All governments must adopt a trajectory that will limit the global average temperature rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We beg those nations with the greatest responsibility and present capacity to provide substantial financial support to vulnerable countries and to agree new targets to enable them to become climate resilient, and to adapt to and to address climate change. The rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities must be given special attention.

We appeal to governments to raise their ambition and their international cooperation to: favour a transition to clean energy; adopt sustainable land use practices; transform food systems to become environmentally-friendly and respectful of local cultures; end hunger; and to promote sustainable lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production. Full consideration must be given to the effects on the workforce of this transition. We call upon financial institutions, banks and investors to adopt responsible financing, and on civil society organisations and everyone to face these challenges in a spirit of collaboration.

For our part, we underline the importance of:

- deepening our efforts to bring about a change of heart among members of our traditions in the way we relate to the Earth and to other people;
- encouraging our educational and cultural institutions to strengthen and prioritise integral ecological education;
- participating actively in the public discourse on environmental issues;
- engaging our congregations and institutions with their neighbours to build sustainable, resilient and just communities;
- emphasising the importance of reducing carbon emissions;
- encouraging our communities to embrace sustainable lifestyles;
- striving to align our financial investments with environmentally and socially responsible standards; and
- evaluating the goods we purchase and the services we hire with the same ethical lens.

Future generations will never forgive us if we miss the opportunity to protect our common home. We have inherited a garden: we must not leave a desert to our children. Scientists have warned us that there might be only one decade left to restore the planet. We plead with the international community, gathered at COP26, to take speedy, responsible and shared action to safeguard, restore and heal our wounded humanity and the home entrusted to our stewardship. We appeal to everyone to join us on this common journey.

Source: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1022917/Joint_Appeal_Executive_Summary.odt

Global Status of Coral Reefs

Report on Status of Coral Reefs
of the World 2020
launched 5 October 2021 by
Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network

Coral reefs occur in more than 100 countries and territories and whilst they cover only 0.2% of the seafloor, they support at least 25% of marine species and underpin the safety, coastal protection, wellbeing, food and economic security of hundreds of millions of people. The value of goods and services provided by coral reefs is estimated at US\$2.7 trillion per year, including US\$36 billion in coral reef tourism. However, coral reefs are among the most vulnerable ecosystems on the planet to anthropogenic pressures, including global threats from climate change and ocean acidification, and local impacts from land-based pollution such as input of nutrients and sediments from agriculture, marine pollution, and overfishing and destructive fishing practices.

Maintaining the integrity and resilience of coral reef ecosystems is essential for the wellbeing of tropical coastal communities worldwide, and a critical part of the solution for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Global Coral Reef Monitoring Network (GCRMN) was established as an operational network of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) in 1995. It aims to provide the best available scientific information on the status and trends of coral reef ecosystems for their conservation and management. The GCRMN is a global network of scientists, managers and organisations that monitor the condition of coral reefs throughout the world. The GCRMN operates through 10 regional nodes.

Its flagship product is the *Status of Coral Reefs of the World* report that describes the status and trends of coral reefs worldwide. This sixth edition of the GCRMN *Status of Coral Reefs of the World* report is the first since 2008, and the first based on the quantitative analysis of a global dataset compiled from raw monitoring data contributed by more than 300 members of the network. The global dataset spanned more than 40 years from 1978 to 2019, and consisted of almost 2 million observations from more than 12,000 sites in 73 reef-bearing countries around the world.

The release of this sixth report on 5 October 2021 coincides with key upcoming biodiversity and climate change meetings, namely the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP15) and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), to provide decision makers with the best available scientific information on the status and trends of coral reef ecosystems for their conservation and management.

The report demonstrates that key indicators of coral reef health and condition, that are recommended by ICRI for inclusion in the new Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, are feasible and provide really important information for decision making.

Key Report Findings

- Around 14% of coral reefs died in a nine-year period between 2009 and 2018 and in the last 10 years, algae on reefs has increased by about 20% - a clear sign of reef stress and decline.
- Coral reefs across the world are under relentless stress from warming and acidification caused by climate change.
- Although the rate and extent of coral decline is severe, there are signs that some coral reefs can recover if left undisturbed. Immediate and drastic action to reduce CO2 emissions will help more coral to recover and survive into the future.
- During the last decade, the interval between mass coral bleaching events has been insufficient to allow coral reefs to recover, although some recovery was observed in 2019 with the world's coral reefs regaining 2% of the coral cover that was previously lost.

Some information provided at the launching event

Major coral reef bleaching events due to global heating began in 1998 with the loss of 8% of corals around the world. There was a partial recovery in 2002-2010, showing that coral reefs still have some resilience. Further bleaching events in 2010 and 2016 caused a 14% coral loss replaced by 20% more algae. Also a sea surface temperature anomaly since 2011 with prolonged high ocean temperatures has hindered coral recovery, driving further reef decline. Since 2019, there is some possible evidence of coral adaptation to increasing temperatures. There has also been considerable variation between subregions, suggesting that some subregions may be better protected than others against ocean warming.

The report is available at <https://gcrmn.net/2020-report/>

Sources: <https://gcrmn.net/> and https://spark.adobe.com/page/0cLdSSdguaftO/?utm_source=social&utm_medium=spark&utm_campaign=gcrmn