



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
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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.

13th IEF WEBINAR

Space Debris as Pollution of the Space Environment with Tamara Blagojević
Saturday, 30 April

10am PDT / 1pm EDT / 19:00 CEST / 20:00 IDT / 22:30 IST

To register, click here: tinyurl.com/IEF-SpacePollution

Description:

The discovery of the space ecosystem has led to the accelerated development of the space industry, the commercialization of space, and in general, the growth of outer space activities, which are characterized as high-risked and presume the usage of large amounts of energy. The consequences that accompany these types of activities are excessive exploitation of natural resources on Earth and pollution of the outer space environment. The impossibility of supervision and tracking due to the lack of appropriate mechanisms and bodies for the resolution and prosecution of potential breaches of Outer Space regulation and the consequent non-transparency of space activities opened the possibility of the illegitimate undertaking of a wide range of activities that can lead to space damages that have transboundary effects on the Earth's environment.

This presentation will first identify the parameters of environmental laws that may apply to outer space. It will then take relevant components of Space law and examine how they apply to environmental damages in outer space, creating a nexus between relevant principles from the two areas of law. The principle of sustainability, supported by the global commons character of outer space and some areas of the Earth's environment, will serve as a guiding framework to enable and justify the application of the relevant principles.

Tamara Blagojević holds a Bachelor degree and an LL.M from the Belgrade University Faculty of Law in the field of International Law, with a focus on Environmental Law and International Humanitarian law. As an activist, with true passion in sustainability and security issues, she chose her master thesis about international liability for environmental damages in Space Law, in the purpose to raise awareness on the fact that preventive mechanisms tend to be untimely implemented in the areas of Law where they're necessary. The master thesis served as a foundation for her chapter of the book on Green Crimes and international Criminal Law published by Vernon Press.

Currently, Tamara is engaging on a project to facilitate the relocation and find affordable housing for Russian-Ukrainian crisis immigrants.

Members Corner

26th CONFERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

The 26th Conference of the IEF will be a contribution to the Stockholm+50 International Meeting, with virtual and local events in Stockholm, Sweden, 1-5 June (possibly also June 11/12) 2022 in collaboration with Baha'i International Community, Swedish Interfaith Council, Baha'i Community of Sweden and other partners. Its topic will be *A healthy planet for the prosperity of all - our responsibility, our opportunity*.

Our proposed events include:

- **Strengthening Global Environmental Governance**, Baha'i International Community proposed side or associated event
- **Global Systems Accounting Beyond Economics**, proposed IEF side or associated event

Virtual events 1-5, 11/12 June 2022 (scheduling still to be decided)

- **Interfaith Prayers for Meeting Success** 1 June (other events under discussion)
- **Empowering local communities**
- **Intergenerational Perspectives on Visions for the Future**

The panel *Intergenerational Perspectives on Visions for the Future* will bring together a participant from the original 1972 Conference alongside five young people from different parts of the world expressing hopes and visions of the future. It promises to be an energized discussion of future global visions.

We are looking for one or two IEF members or associates who are interested in reporting about the events of the conference for the IEF website, who are good English writers and capable of catching the essential points of a program.

As our plans develop, we will release regular announcements on our progress. For questions, volunteering, or further information, please contact Douglas Gilbert at dgilbert659@gmail.com.

GREAT NEWS: UPGRADE OF THE IEF MEMBERSHIP DATA BASE



We are exceedingly **grateful to IEF member Michael Semple** in Switzerland for spending many weeks of diligent work to improve IEF's membership database on our Drupal Website. Words cannot adequately thank Mike for his essential contribution to help IEF survive and thrive in the years to come!

In the process of working with the information received from our members and associates, we noticed that much of it is outdated. Moreover, the options for volunteering and the expression of personal interests were changed/revised just two weeks ago:

Options for Volunteering

- Write for the IEF newsletter
- Volunteer to help review and edit articles and papers submitted by members
- Contribute to the IEF web site (content, design or organization)
- Help advise and mentor other members or associates on their choice of study or career

Expression of Personal Interests

- Participate in public discourse about the environment
- Take part in local environmental/social action

We kindly ask all IEF members and associates to update their information about themselves.

This is very easy to do: Just **login to the IEF website <https://www.iefworld.org>** You will automatically come to your personal information. Click on edit, then change and add what you like. When you are done, don't forget to click on "save" at the bottom of the page.

If you encounter any difficulties, contact the IEF Secretariat at ief@iefworld.org

PUBLICATIONS OF ARTICLES BY IEF MEMBERS

How can engineering students be motivated to apply their vast technical background to solve major problems in today's society?

IEF Member Rafael Shayani from Brazil just had an article published on the website of *IEEE Teaching Excellence Hub*: How can engineering students be motivated to apply their vast technical background to solve major problems in today's society?

[Go here](#) to read this interesting article.

Navigating the Urgent Transition Toward Sustainability

Wilmette Institute Webinar
with IEF President Arthur Dahl
6 April 2022

The Wilmette Institute, in collaboration with the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) presented a free Spring 2022 lecture on 6 April for students of GTU and University of California at Berkeley, as well as the Wilmette Institute.

The science says that the affluent are the most responsible for the existential challenges of climate change, the biodiversity crisis and pollution threats and that we must turn the corner in this decade before these crises lead to catastrophe. Governments have already, in the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and other texts, mapped out a plan forward. The failure is in implementation due to the power of vested interests, corruption, materialist ideologies and the lack of political will faced with the necessary material sacrifices. Only a just transition motivated by ethical and spiritual values at the grass roots can lay the foundations for a more meaningful and sustainable social order, offering a positive way forward through the turmoil of the inevitably difficult transition.

Laurent Mesbah, Wilmette Institute Adjunct Faculty for its course on Sustainability and Human Prosperity, and IEF member, hosted this online presentation.

The recording of this webinar is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzAF9LpEYnA>

Principles requisite for climate action

Indore Bahá'í Chair

14 April 2022

INDORE, India, 14 April 2022, (BWNS) — For the past two years, the Bahá'í Chair for Studies in Development at Devi Ahilya University, Indore, has been organizing a [series of webinars](#) on the social and economic impact of the pandemic on India's most vulnerable populations.

At its most recent gathering, the Chair brought together academics and economists to explore the nature of transformation that would be required in the systems of society and collective understanding in order to bring humanity into greater balance with the natural world.

"In the long term, efforts to address the multi-dimensional and complex issues related to climate change will need to go beyond technical solutions and beyond even strategies for mitigation. Rather, they must enhance consciousness about a new set of fundamental values central to addressing climate change, such as the principles of the oneness of humankind, justice, and the stewardship of the earth's natural resources," said Arash Fazli, Assistant Professor and Head of the Bahá'í Chair, at the gathering.

Ashwini Hingne, of the World Resources Institute, stated: "So far, what we've seen is that the conversation [on climate action] has largely been top-down and technology centered. Conversations have largely focused on building an economic case for moving in the right direction and have led to a slow political process, with private sector interests at the forefront.

"However, what is needed is a change in the discourse on climate action that acknowledges and integrates more meaningfully the interconnectedness of our lives, nature, and the effects of the economic activities that we undertake."

Participants discussed how any attempt to achieve such a change in the discourse on climate action would need to address the deep-rooted assumption underlying political, economic, and social structures—that human beings are incorrigibly selfish.



"We don't have the luxury of making these assumptions about human beings. ... We have to believe that people are capable of a different value system free of egocentrism," said Sharachandra Lele, Senior Fellow of the Centre for Environment and Development at the Ashoka Trust.

Discussions highlighted that such a value system would promote universal participation in climate action and see capacity in human beings and institutions for transcending differences in order to make collective decisions for the common good.

Reflecting on the event, Dr. Fazli draws on insights from the Bahá'í teachings that highlight consultation and cooperation among individuals, communities, and institutions as essential for addressing the pressing issues facing humanity.

"Whether mobilized through agencies of the state or through voluntary action in communities, people in local settings, communities, government, academia, and the private sector need to work in concert to identify

achievable milestones and context-specific solutions to their challenges," he said.

The webinar hosted by the Indore Bahá'í Chair can be viewed [here](#).

Source: Baha'i World News Service <https://news.bahai.org/story/1591/>

Harnessing COVID-19 recovery for a positive, sustainable future for all CSW66 Side Event

On March 17, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations (NAWO) sponsored a Side Event at the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) on the topic of *Harnessing COVID-19 recovery for a positive, sustainable future for all*.

The moderator was IEF member Wendi Momen and the panelists were IEF members Maja Groff representing the [Global Governance Forum](#) and the [Climate Governance Commission](#), and Christine Muller representing the International Environment Forum. Unfortunately, two other panelists were unable to attend. The event was hosted by NAWO and co-sponsored by ebbf (Ethical Business Building the Future, IEF, Advance, and Widows Rights International).

The recording is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RCZzkGHR1fg>

Gender, Climate and Security: A Just Transition towards Peace and Prosperity

On March 23, 2022, the Global Peace and Prosperity Forum co-sponsored a side event at the sixty-sixth session of the commission of the status of women on *Gender, Climate and Security: A Just Transition towards Peace and Prosperity*.

The speakers:

- Ms. Patricia Espinosa - Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the United Nations framework Convention on Climate Change
- Dr. Helena Dalli - European Commissioner for Equality
- Ms. Reem Alsalem - United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences
- Dr. Payam Akhavan - Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague
- Dr. Renata Avelar Giannini- Senior Researcher, the Igarapé Institute.
- Moderated by Ms. Neda Salmanpour - Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Global Peace and Prosperity Forum.

The speakers addressed the intersection between gender inequality, state fragility and climate vulnerability and the challenges they present to the well-being of our communities and the ecosystems upon which we depend; underlined the crucial role of women in tackling climate change and the need for gender balance in the international climate change process. The panel thereafter highlighted the importance of climate justice, including gender justice, and the role of ethics of care in protecting the global commons for present and future generations; elaborated on the gender dimensions of security and climate change and the different ways in which women and men experience and manage crisis and risks; addressed the high prevalence of gender-based violence against women and girls, which worsen during climate and environmental crises, disasters and displacements; emphasised the importance of women's economic empowerment, voice and agency and highlighted the unique role of indigenous women in applying their knowledge and skill for effective adaptation strategies and climate resilience programmes and its implications for the promotion of gender equality, climate justice and the advancement of peace and security. The panel highlighted the imperative of a unified and coordinated global response and emphasised the urgency of environmental stewardship on a global scale for effective adaptation and mitigation programmes and policies. Noting the most vulnerable segments of the earth's population will be on the frontline of global warming, the panel concluded the principle of justice, including intergenerational justice, as well as the ethics of care, for people and the planet, must be the imperative of collective response.

The recording of the event is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DjZBx9XMrE&t=3916s>

Special Section on Agriculture – 3 important articles

Rural Social Action on Agriculture and Food - Uganda Case Study

Masaidio Kalenga

The following example of the transformative power of the Bahá'í teachings on agriculture and food as applied in rural Uganda was prepared by Masaidio Kalenga during a Wilmette Institute course on Bahá'í perspectives on Agriculture and Food in March 2022, and is shared here with his permission. May it inspire many others to follow his example. This is a shortened version of his article. To read the full version, go here: <https://www.iefworld.org/elcKalenga>*

My involvement in social action began way back in 2007 and my love for agriculture increased when I started visiting villages in Eastern Uganda and getting first-hand experience of the conditions of the farmers. I recall an encounter with a family that had a girl whom we wanted to enroll as a participant in one of the programs offered by a Baha'i inspired organizations in Uganda. Upon hearing that agriculture is one of the lines of action that the organization focuses on and helps their participants to get engaged in, the mother of the girl refused to let her join the program. Agriculture, according to her, was not something she would wish her daughter to pursue as a vocation. The disappointment in the face of this mother is so common among farmers in many parts of Uganda. My experience living in the rural community had convinced me that agriculture plays a key role in the life of humanity, but I could not comprehend why a farmer is still neglected by those she feeds.

1. Study of the Baha'i Writings on Agriculture

Drawing from the Writings of the Faith to understand the special place that agriculture occupies in the life of humanity has power to transform the hearts of many who would otherwise think that it is an activity that should only be carried out by the uneducated or rural people or the elderly folks.

For 3 days, 16 participants came together to study and reflect on Baha'i Perspectives on Agriculture and Food and thereafter took some actions to apply what they had learned. They were helped to understand what the Central Figures of the Faith not only said about a farmer as being a "primary factor in the body politic" but also the actions they took to practically demonstrate how agriculture "precedeth all the other principles" for the administration of the affairs of men.

Some themes were explored including agriculture and world peace, the farmer and community, responsibility of Baha'i institutions, and individual pursuit of agriculture. Each theme had a wealth of quotations from the Holy Writings which were explored in depth and experiences shared based on the reality of the friends in their communities.

At the end of the day, it was clear that the participants' language had changed and they could be heard quoting directly from the Writings about agriculture and the special regard it must be accorded.

2. Home Visits

The participants in this space had identified 63 families from two villages to engage in conversations about agriculture. The insights gained from the study of the Writings on agriculture assisted them to have meaningful conversations with each family that they visited on day 3 of the training.



Visiting Mzee Kalindi

Before going out to visit these families, participants reflected on a range of questions including their role in accompanying the families, goals and objectives, skills and capacity they are helping the families to develop, how to ensure that the community members are seeing the benefits of participating in these activities, how and when to start involving these families in the core activities of the Faith.

The excitement on the faces of the participants after visiting 20 families was an indication that the home visits were a success. After the training, one participant wrote: "Indeed all the families are so happy and excited about their involvement in Backyard Garden activities and slowly by slowly the communities of Bukutira East and West have started showing glimmerings of collective transformation..." We spent about an hour reflecting on each group's experience with the families. It was evident that the families wanted this kind of collaboration to continue. Families shared their own experiences with farming and the challenges around them. For instance, lack of seeds was one of the challenges that most families mentioned. Joseph, for example, took the group that visited him to the garden that he had prepared as a result of the conversations initiated by the participant accompanying his family, but he had not planted because of lack of seeds. He was excited to hear that the participants are planning to establish a seed bank where the community members will be borrowing seeds and paying a small interest instead of buying seeds which many farmers cannot afford and sometimes are expired.

3. Introducing Agriculture in a Study Circle

Another participant who attended our training decided to introduce the idea of growing crops in her study circle. The group has 13 young mothers who are being helped to go through the institute process with the aim that they will become children's class teachers and junior youth animators. Most of these young mothers stay at home. One way to strengthen the group, the participant thought, was to introduce the idea of helping each young mother to establish a backyard garden of vegetables. In collaboration with a Baha'i inspired organization, the tutor of the study circle placed an order for seedlings and all the ladies are waiting for them to be ready for transplanting.



A group of young mothers studying Book 1 in Wanyonge Village

* Masaidio Kalenga is originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo but has lived in Uganda since 1998. Although he holds Computer Science and MBA degrees, he decided to focus more on agriculture and food production on small farms. His love for agriculture started taking shape when he was given the opportunity to serve with a Baha'i-inspired organization implementing the Preparation for Social Action program in Uganda (FUNDAEC curriculum). The organization invited him a couple of years ago to coordinate its agriculture line of action when its agriculture resource person had to leave the country. Seeing families growing their own food and sharing with their neighbours the harvests always brings joy to his heart!

Rebuilding from the Soil Up

By IEF Member Douglas Gilbert and James Craig

Two abiding principles of the United Nations Rio Declaration on Environment and Development were:

- "Human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature." [1]
- "The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations". [2]

Ironically, the UN adopted these principles during the early days of the siege of Sarajevo, but never deployed them during the rebuilding years of Sarajevo or so many other war-torn cities. Six years after the destruction of Aleppo, sixty percent of its residents are food insecure and reliant on the World Food Program for survival. After years of conflict, all of Iraq is in similar straits with fifty-three percent food insecurity. Years of war left Afghanistan in even worse shape, and Sarajevo remains wracked by unemployment, poverty, and corruption. Without a principled structure for rebuilding societies, victims of conflict face a harsh future.

A principled structure for sustainable development that meets the needs of present and future generations in harmony with nature must incorporate the farmers, the "founders of human civilization." [3]

“The question of economics must commence with the farmer and then be extended to the other classes inasmuch as the number of farmers is far greater than all other classes. Therefore, it is fitting to begin with the farmer in matters related to economics for the farmer is the first active agent in human society.” [4]

The recent invasion of Ukraine is particularly horrifying due to the possibilities of escalation to biological, chemical, and even nuclear warfare beyond the borders of Ukraine. The world will also experience the significance of agriculture across our global society as Ukrainian farmers question whether to plant crops this season. Ukraine is the size of Texas and contains some of the most fertile farmland, but supplies of seed, fuel, and other necessities are threatened by war. One third of the world’s wheat exports originate in Russia and Ukraine, and even if the harvest comes in, it is uncertain whether it could move to the Baltic ports for shipment to the rest of the world.

“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.” [5]

Everything about the Ukraine crisis cries for solutions based on the Baha’i principles of peace, unity, self-determination, and prosperity for all. Ending the war, promoting awareness of world-changing events, extolling the unity of mankind, and giving to charity is not enough. It is time to find the formula for rebuilding war-torn communities and begin the planning process for rebuilding Ukrainian society from the soil up. Failure to find a sustainable solution to redevelop Ukraine, leaves bleak future for everyone.

Beyond initial emergency assistance, equitable and sustainable development programs that meet the needs of the entire local community need the commitment of the greater global community. The partisan agendas employed in the prior efforts have been the “principal enemy of the causes they purport to serve,” [6] leaving cities like Sarajevo, Aleppo, Baghdad, and Kabul suffering from extensive unemployment, food insecurity, poverty, injustice, and fear for their futures.

Imagine a different approach that incorporates spiritual principles into a prototype model for sustaining community development in demolished cities, including the processes and institutions that form the foundation for community rebuilding and restoration of justice, security, and serenity.

The intensely relevant application of the “the society building power” [7] of the Baha’i Faith, could leverage Baha’i principles to rebuild social structures and inject sustainable rigor into a committed plan for real spiritual and material progress. Bringing farmers and urban architects together to fashion a new world by merging Baha’i concepts into the community fabric during the reconstruction process could serve as a working model for other communities. In the spirit of ‘Abdul-Bahá’s exemplary land reclamation project in ‘Adasiyyah, advanced agricultural techniques rooted in science can generate a local economy under the vision and guidance of a community vision formed by resident stakeholders. In addition, networking principles, techniques, and technologies may be employed to connect the global expanse of communities and educational institutions, leverage the knowledge gained in similar efforts, and enhance the learning process through all communities within the network.

Imagine research collaborations among communities and universities across the globe, transferring knowledge to others via published studies, online workshops, and shared learning materials translated into the local languages. Community engagement platforms could tie into the network to facilitate a flurry of reconstruction from an agricultural economy into an array of manufactured products and delivered services designed to serve the educational, social, spiritual, and material progress of the communities into the future, using the inherent power of modern networking to connect people with people, ideas, and opportunities. The generosity of an active network could form the vibrant hub of the learning communities.

[1] Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, (Principle 1), August 1992

[2] Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, (Principle 3), August 1992

[3] Attributed to Daniel Webster

[4] Extract from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

[5] Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, pp. 249

[6] The Prosperity of Humankind, Statement from the Baha’i International Community, 3 March 1995

[7] Attributed to Shoghi Effendi

Sustainable Agriculture – a Solution to Food Insecurity amidst Climate Change

By IEF Associate Shamsideen Olawunmi Sebiotimo

Agriculture and climate change are inextricably concatenated. Crop yield, water use, soil fertility and productivity, biodiversity, etc. are directly affected by climate change.

Global warming affects agriculture through its impact on the climate including on precipitation (rainfall) and hydrological cycles. Climate change induces changes in the distribution and quantity of precipitation which have a strong influence on agricultural production. The impact of climate change on agriculture is mostly negative as it reduces crop and livestock productivity. Thus, to ensure food security amidst climate change, it is imperative to first understand climate change and how it affects agricultural productivity. Therefore, the effects of climate change on agricultural productivity can be viewed from three angles, namely hydrology, pests and diseases, and economic consequences:

- 1. Hydrology**--In many agricultural areas climate change affects the hydrological cycle through more frequent and intense droughts and floods. Global warming reduces the number of rainy days (and therefore rainfall distribution) over the course of a year, but it can also cause torrential rainfall when it does rain. This pattern of rainfall is not good for crop production because crops prefer more days of rain (a well distributed rainfall) that gently drops from the sky instead of a pouring rain. Torrential rainfall causes floods, erosion, and eventually land degradation; whereas fewer days of rainfall cause drought. It is known that drought, flood, and erosion affect soil biodiversity, soil fertility and productivity, and soil water. In addition, global warming leads to an increase in evaporation of soil water, thereby reducing the amount of water available for plant use.
- 2. Pests and Diseases**--One of the factors that drives the spread of pests and diseases of crops is climate change. According to experts, temperature and rainfall are the major contributors to how and where pests and diseases spread. Tek Sapkota, an agricultural systems and climate change scientist at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), has stated that an "increase in temperature and precipitation levels favours the growth and distribution of most pest species by providing a warm and humid environment and providing necessary moisture for their growth." However, when temperature and precipitation levels get too high, for some pest species growth and reproduction slow down. Too much precipitation can also destroy crop pests by washing their eggs and larvae off the host plant. Therefore, the increase in temperature and precipitation to an intolerable level helps explain why many pests are moving away from the tropics towards more temperate areas. Warmer temperature makes pests more active but only up to a certain point. If temperature is too hot or too cold, growth and development of pests will slow down. Temperate regions currently are not at the optimal temperature for pests and diseases to thrive; hence, it is anticipated that populations will grow swiftly in these areas as they warm up. Research reveals that since 1960, with temperature increases, crop pests and diseases have been moving at an average speed of 3 km a year in the direction of the earth's north and south poles. According to CIMMYT ([International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center](#)), tar spot, a fungal disease native to Latin America which can cause up to 50% yield losses in maize, was detected for the first time in the US in 2015. Normally prevalent in tropical climates, the disease has begun to emerge in non-tropical regions including the highland areas of Central Mexico and many counties in the US. Another example from CIMMYT is the Southern pine beetle, one of the most destructive insects invading North America, which is moving north as the temperature rises and is likely to spread throughout North-Eastern United States and South-Eastern Canada by 2050.
- 3. Economic Consequences**--The effects of climate change on agriculture will cause the prices of agricultural crops to rise. This in turn leads to higher prices for food and livestock feed which leads to higher meat prices.

On these notes, to solve the problem of food insecurity, sustainable agriculture - among other things - is imperative in addressing the negative impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity. Sustainable agriculture is a type of agriculture that focuses on the long-term production of crops and livestock with little or no damage to the environment. The aims of sustainable agriculture include balancing the use of resources with

protection of the environment, protecting biodiversity, and improving yield. Benefits of sustainable agriculture are numerous. For example, in terms of health, crops grown through sustainable agriculture are better for human consumption with exposure to synthetic materials being reduced due to an overall decrease in chemical pesticide and fertilizer use. This will limit the risk of people becoming ill from exposure to these chemicals. In addition, because they are produced from a healthier and natural environment, crops grown under sustainable agriculture are more nutritious. In regard to the environment, sustainable agriculture has a positive influence. This is reflected when considering that according to experts, in comparison to industrialized agriculture, sustainable agriculture uses 30% less energy per unit of crop yield. This reduces reliance on fossil fuels and eventually results in the release of fewer chemicals and pollutants into the environment. Moreover, since sustainable agriculture produces a variety of organisms in a healthy and natural environment, benefits to the environment such as maintaining soil quality, reducing soil degradation and erosion, conserving soil water, and improving soil biodiversity, are experienced. Finally, in terms of economic benefits, sustainable agriculture increases farm profitability and ensures that economic stability for farmers is maintained over a long time-period.

There are many farming strategies that can be used to make agriculture more sustainable. Some of the key sustainable farming practices that have emerged over decades include planting cover crops, rotating crops, embracing crop diversity, applying integrated pest management (IPM), integrating livestock with crops, reducing or eliminating tillage, adopting agroforestry practices, and utilizing drip irrigation.

Until farmers adopt sustainable farming techniques, they will continue to experience problems of land degradation and low yield, especially during this critical time of climate change. When agricultural operations are sustainably managed, habitats will be preserved and restored, watersheds will be protected, and soil health and water quality will be improved. On the other hand, unsustainable agricultural practices will have negative impacts on people and the environment. Therefore, as demand for agricultural goods is rising swiftly due to an increase in the world's population, the need for sustainable agricultural resource management is essential and urgent.

God bless our farmers!!!

Challenging Economic Assumptions Driving Climate Change

by Arthur Lyon Dahl

20 March 2022

Reprinted from the Global Governance Forum:
<https://globalgovernanceforum.org/challenging-economic-assumptions/>

People and institutions act within a framework of assumptions about the world, how it works, and what is right and wrong. Such assumptions, absorbed unconsciously throughout life, are constantly reinforced and generally unquestioned. Where these in fact do not conform to reality and become obstacles to change, it is necessary as a first step to question such assumptions. This is the challenge faced by the economy and business today.

Modern neoliberal economic thinking is founded on the assumption that people are fundamentally

selfish and aggressive, so we accept as normal that markets and politics are powered by ego, greed, apathy and violence, and that our society values wealth, power and fame. This reflects the animal nature of man. Animals have no free will but are constrained within their ecosystems. When humans give free rein to their animal nature, they have no natural limits and become worse than animals, as demonstrated by our violence, wars, and multiple forms of inhumanity and exploitation.

The economy measures success as wealth, whether personal wealth or national wealth measured as GDP. At the corporate level it is profit, return on capital and stock market valuation that generate this wealth. While we condemn individual

behaviour that is so greedy, selfish and aggressive that it injures others, we do not see as easily how these values are incorporated in our institutions, particularly modern corporations. Many of the dominant corporations today are greed institutionalized, ready to do anything to maximise profits, with the ends justifying any means. And as institutions, they have little conscience, moral framework or sense of humanity to restrain them. They are behind climate change, biodiversity loss, massive pollution, human exploitation, extremes of poverty and wealth, the arms race, and most of the other ills we have failed to control.

Normally it is government that should ensure the common good of all, but corporate lobbies and corruption now control most governments, and there is no global governance for non-state entities like corporations. All the efforts at multilateral cooperation among states to address human rights and environmental sustainability fail in implementation because they have no influence over those with the real power today in the economic system.

Selfishness is behind the consumer society, where businesses cultivate endless wants and even addictions in the search for profits, regardless of the human and environmental costs. Think of the alcohol and tobacco industries, the arms industry, junk food and many other sectors that take no responsibility for the impact of their production. One recent example is COVID-19 vaccine development captured as corporate intellectual property to be sold to the wealthy for extravagant profit while depriving the poor of protection and extending the pandemic.

This is not a new problem. Black racism has its roots in the transatlantic slave trade beginning over 400 years ago. Colonisation was driven by the entrepreneurial search for wealth by conquest, but exploiting the rich soils of the new world required cheap labour, and Africa was the nearest source. Governments supported these new entrepreneurs by passing laws defining blacks as property rather than human beings to facilitate their exploitation, legalising and justifying slavery, and laying the foundation for modern racism. Today exploitation takes other forms, but the consequences are equally immoral.

To address this problem, we must question the basic economic assumptions about human nature. Drawing on all faith traditions and many other

philosophical sources, we can identify universal values by which to judge such basic assumptions. There is wide consensus across many faith traditions that human reality includes a non-material or spiritual dimension, at least in potential. We can and should rise above our animal reality. This requires education, and especially education to higher values like honesty, integrity, trustworthiness and generosity. We also have a capacity for social values such as moderation, justice, love, reason, sacrifice and service to the common good. These are the values upon which civilisations have been built, and they are now needed today more than ever. They can provide a framework of values for our rapidly evolving world society, physically united but still far from accepting the oneness of humankind. This rejection of our unity in diversity is at the root of today's crises.

The opposite of selfishness is acceptance of the oneness of humanity, that every human being is a trust of the whole, and that suffering anywhere in the world causes all of us to suffer. True happiness comes from living a virtuous life, refining one's character and contributing to the advancement of civilisation through one's profession and acts of service. Business competition can be replaced by cooperation and reciprocity, with innovation motivated by service to the common good, and by wide consultation on the best use of discoveries for the advancement of society as a whole. A market can work best with an honest consultation between buyers and sellers about a just price between cost and need. The economic system can still generate wealth, but with the aim of making everyone wealthy.

Where wealth is the measure of economic success, power is its political equivalent. Political leaders driven by a desire for power and fame are similarly selfish and aggressive. Clearly the concept of power as a means of domination, with the accompanying notions of contest, contention, division and superiority, are behind the failure of governments today to serve the common good. We need systems of governance that empower everyone to contribute, consulting on needs and searching for solutions that provide for the wellbeing of all and the sustainability of the environment upon which we all depend, free from the battles of ego that define politics today.

We must transform those economic and financial institutions that are the embodiment of greed and selfishness which are inherent in their legal

charters and stock markets that give absolute priority to profit and return on investment. Economic entities such as corporations need revised legal charters that define a social purpose to do good and avoid harm, with profit only one measure of efficiency among others. Governments also need to provide a framework of law and regulation that defines the common interest to be respected, including at the global level.

New non-financial measures and systems of accounting are needed to define progress and motivate positive action. They could guide us to restore climate stability and productive ecosystems and prevent pollution. They could define a society able to meet the basic material needs of all with proper nutrition and good health, to provide

meaningful work and access to education, to encourage knowledge, science, art and culture, all by fostering the values and spiritual capital that would be the measures of an ever-advancing civilisation.

Redrafting corporate charters should not be so difficult if there is the political and social will. Admittedly there are sectors of the economy with no social purpose that would disappear. Changing the ground rules by which businesses operate from selfishness to service would transform corporations from the root of the problem to part of the solution. The lobbies and vested interests that block transformation today would vanish, and make possible the acceleration in positive action that is needed to save us before it is too late.

Humanity at a Crossroads – Breakdown or Breakthrough

Civil Society Declaration for Stockholm+50

One year before the 50th anniversary of the conference in 1972, the “Stockholm+49 Summit,” began to drive the necessary paradigm shift at a global level. It mobilized civil society organizations, academics, and policymakers to advocate for a strengthened and “fit for purpose” global framework for environmental governance and law. The main goal was to build consensus among civil society actors to present a one-page Declaration with a structured four-step pathway towards the critical paradigm shift we need.

The Stockholm+50 International Meeting, taking place on 2-3 June 2022, is a key opportunity to build this pathway of hope towards the needed critical paradigm shift for Humanity and cannot be missed. This meeting is being used as an “ideas laboratory” to develop innovative solutions for the commons, economy, and governance, which will become the seeds of action at the 2023 Summit of the Future, as foreseen in the UN Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda report. The IEF is accredited to Stockholm+50 and is planning a series of associated events as its annual conference to present innovative solutions its members have been working on. After 50 years, we cannot let down those who started on this path, including IEF President Arthur Dahl. Our very future continues to depend on it.

Here is the full text of the Civil Society Declaration for Stockholm+50 which the IEF has signed:

Humanity at a Crossroads – Breakdown or Breakthrough

The world’s dire ecological situation, and the challenges faced by present and future generations, are increasingly clear. Youth are protesting in the streets and in the courts, as calls for deep transformation and renewal are heard from all segments of society. On October 8, 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) recognized the “right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment”. For this right to be implemented, structural changes to the legal, economic, social, political, and technological

spheres will be required to restore a stable and well-functioning Earth System. A shared consciousness of our global interdependence must give rise to a new common logic, to define and recognize the global commons that support life on Earth — the planetary system that connects us all and on which we all depend. This is a foundational step toward the establishment of a governance system to effectively manage human interactions with the Earth System(1). Fifty years after the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the signatories of this civil society Declaration call upon the United Nations, its agencies, and all

Member States to act upon a four-step pathway towards the critical paradigm shift we all need.

1 - Implement the Right to a Healthy Environment.

Member States should implement UNHRC Resolution 48/13 recognizing this right. This requires acknowledging and acting upon intra- and intergenerational equity which, in turn, requires that principles are progressive and include obligations of non-regression – e.g., enshrining a “regeneration” agenda – in all spheres of environmental law. Non-regression must prevent erosion of protection, while principles of regeneration and progression will ensure that environmental laws and regulations consistently advance in both ambition and effectiveness. It entails ensuring procedural environmental rights, including access to information, public participation, and access to justice. The right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (itself a core global public good) can only be achieved if our shared life support system – the Earth System – is protected as a single, indivisible whole.

2 – Recognize, Restore and Safeguard the Global Commons.

The foundational step for successfully managing a common good is to recognize and define it. This will facilitate the establishment of a genuinely effective global environmental governance framework, consistent with the indivisibility of the natural system that supports life on this planet. A well-functioning Earth System, keeping humanity in a “safe operating space” within all vital and interdependent Planetary Boundaries, must be recognized as a fundamental global common in need of urgent stewardship. It thus should be legally recognized as the “Common Heritage” of humankind. A stable climate is a manifestation of the Earth System functioning and represents more than an issue of “Common Concern,” as expressed in the Paris Agreement. Due to the urgency of the climate crisis, the recognition of a stable climate as Common Heritage, to allow for its restoration and

safeguard, must become an immediate flagship issue and central priority in the “Our Common Agenda” process.

3 – Establish a Regenerative Economy.

Our current economic system treats the consumption of physical natural resources as “wealth creation,” despite the resulting destruction of natural infrastructure. A prosperous future requires an economy in which the natural processes that support all life on Earth and maintain a stable climate become economically visible. Recognizing the Earth System and a stable climate as a “Common Heritage” will enable the proper valuation of these benefits for human societies, which today are considered mere “externalities”. This will provide the legal basis and catalyst to build a regenerative economy and a system of governance that restores and maintains a stable climate and other vital Planetary Boundaries.

4 - Prioritize Governance and Institutional Solutions.

The long-term governance of the global commons, the delivery of global public goods, and management of global public risks all require a permanent system of effective governance to reliably manage our interactions with the Earth System as a whole. For example, a proposal to repurpose the inactive United Nations Trusteeship Council has been widely discussed, including most recently in the UN Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda (OCA) report. The OCA report calls for a Declaration for Future Generations and highlights the desirability of transforming the Council into a multilateral space for the governance of the commons and to give voice to the interests of succeeding generations. Ensuring adequate global ecological governance and strengthening today’s fragmented institutional frameworks, and making them inclusive, representative, and accountable to global citizens, must be made a central priority for the international community.

(1) The Earth System is the "global environment as an integrated whole." The set of global interacting physical, chemical, and biological cycles that allows and is regulated by life on Earth. It is the integration of the geophysical properties of our planet with the living biosphere – including humans and human activities – that forms the Earth System. Self-regulation through synergistic feedback loops is a key dimension of a functioning Earth System. See Steffen, W. et al. (2020). The emergence and evolution of Earth System Science. *Nature Reviews Earth & Environment*. 1: 54-63. 10.1038/s43017-019-0005-6.

Source: <https://www.stockholmdeclaration.org/full-declaration/>

Climate Change 2022 Mitigation of Climate Change

Summary for Policymakers
4 April 2022

The Working Group III (WG III) contribution to the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) assesses literature on the scientific, technological, environmental, economic and social aspects of mitigation of climate change. It just released its report which you can read here: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>

The IEF compiled its headlines without confidence levels and references to footnotes for quick and easy reading here: <https://www.iefworld.org/node/1243>

This article provides a brief overview of the report:

The Window for Climate Action Has Not Yet Closed

<https://unfccc.int/news/the-window-for-climate-action-has-not-yet-closed>

Some Articles of Interest

Science as a Global Public Good

The paper published by the International Science Council (ISC) explores the importance of science as a global public good: a source of beneficial and applicable knowledge that is freely available and accessible worldwide, and which can be used by anyone, anywhere, without preventing or impeding its use by others.

The position paper develops the ISC's vision of science as a global public good, expanding on the implications of that vision for how science is conducted and used, and on the roles that it plays in society. As such, the paper provides an important foundation to inform all of the ISC's activities and work to support and maintain ethical practice in science, as well as to advance science that responds to the needs of society.

The paper argues that science has two fundamental attributes that underpin its value as a global public good: that knowledge claims and the evidence on which they are based are made openly available to scrutiny, and that the results of scientific research are communicated promptly and efficiently so that all who may wish or need to access those results can do so.

The report is available in seven languages here: <https://council.science/current/news/science-as-a-global-public-good/>

Systemic Risk Briefing Note highlights complexity of interconnected, interdependent, and uncertain challenges

The systemic and uncertain risks facing the world today can have cascading impacts across systems and sectors, and an integrated perspective that incorporates the inherently complex nature of climate-related hazards, vulnerability, exposure and impacts, is needed to better understand and respond to systemic risk, according to a new briefing note published by the International Science Council (ISC), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Risk Knowledge Action Network (Risk KAN).

You can download the report here:

<https://council.science/current/news/systemic-risk-briefing-note/>

Sacrifice Zones: 50 of the Most Polluted Places on Earth

By David R. Boyd, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Environment

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/SacrificeZones-userfriendlyversion.pdf>

Global Water Waste

The Top Statistics that Reveal the Environmental Damage of Water Wastage Worldwide.

<https://www.utilitybidder.co.uk/our-services/business-water/environmental-damage-of-global-water-waste/>