



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM
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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

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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.

27th IEF Annual Conference
Implementing Solidarity – Global to Local

We hope that you have registered for the **IEF conference which will begin this Saturday, 16 September!** Of course, you can still register for any of the events! Visit the IEF conference website for detailed information: <https://iefworld.org/conf27>

Also, please, invite your family, friends, community members, as well as people you are collaborating with for social change. You can download the conference flyer or just share the link: <https://iefworld.org/fl/conf27flyer.pdf>

We are very excited to share with you below some of the expected highlights from each panel.

You will see that the conference is really “global to local”. Some panels report on wonderful grassroots initiatives from all around the world, and some others share bold new perspectives on global solidarity, specifically on global environmental governance and its prerequisites of trust and accountability.



Some highlights of the upcoming conference:

16 September 1pm EDT / 7pm CEST

What have we learned? – Sharing Local Experiences and Case Studies

IEF members and friends share their experiences of grass-roots environmental efforts in rural and urban communities across the globe. They will talk about local initiatives such as “Community Gardens as a Path to Service and Community Building”, “Environmental Retrofit Company with spiritual principles guiding company operations in the rural Rocky Mountains of Colorado”, “Transitioning homes toward higher energy efficiency and away from fossil fuels”, and “Junior Youth Ecological Camps in Colombia”.

This will be an interactive event that encourages IEF members and the wider public to share their perspectives and own initiatives.

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF2023-CaseStudies>

18 September 1pm EDT / 7 pm CEST

Trust and Accountability: Bringing Values into our Future

Daniel Perell, Representative to the UN for the Baha'i International Community, will talk about **Vision and Values: Laying a Foundation for a Functioning International System**. He will outline some of the characteristics necessary for a functioning international system - solidarity beyond borders, selfless service, consideration of future generations. With these in mind, he will question certain assumptions of what exists today and, more importantly, proposes new approaches which will allow a trustworthy and effective global governance structure to emerge.

Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Associate Professor with the Public Administration and Policy Group of Wageningen University, the Netherlands, will speak on the topic **Truthfulness and Trustworthiness as foundations for trust and accountability in global governance**. She will explain how truthfulness and trustworthiness need to be two of the values that form the foundation for an international system that can effectively address the challenges of humanity. Multilateral collaboration, however, is currently plagued by distrust, and the lack of accountability of particularly the most powerful actors in global governance is glaring. At the same time, the building of accountable institutions at all levels is one of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. Thus a Summit of the Future needs to reflect on strategies to strengthen trust, accountability and the values they build on.

Without a vision, at the very least, of the principles which must underlie a functioning international order, it is difficult to imagine how we would get there.

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_PHgAfNe0Rca_AipzVHru1g

19 September 1pm EDT / 7 pm CEST

Community engagement and diverse representation for social transformation

The panelists will share experiences of how underrepresented groups at the local level have been the protagonists of social change in their community, and the potential this has for future transformation.

Christian Lupembo will start the panel with a topic that is highly important for both a healthy environment and a healthy community development: **The contribution of women to sustainable agriculture in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**.

Have you heard about the **Combili Urban Garden initiative in Yerevan, Armenia**? The young Alda Aflatuni will tell the story of how she and her friends help reduce waste and empower children and youth to influence habits on a community level and to inspire decision makers to take part.

Coral Reef Restoration and Youth Empowerment in Fiji will be the subject of Dr. Austin Bowden-Kerby's presentation. Austin's knowledge and wisdom are impressive, and his enthusiasm contagious.

Look for the other interesting stories from Uganda and Greenland as well as speaker information in the [conference program!](#)

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_cFmnuX0gR9aOxprOTHq6kg

20 September 8:30am EDT / 2:30 pm CEST

Global Environmental Governance

Despite more than half a century of international conferences, conventions, action plans and other efforts to prevent the destruction of the planetary environment, its decline is accelerating, with climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste becoming existential threats to our future, and raising issues of social justice and eco-anxiety. Voluntary agreements depending on the good will of countries have not worked to protect the global commons. Only a global environmental institution with a mandate to adopt binding legislation based on the best scientific advice, to negotiate the equitable sharing of responsibilities to remain within planetary boundaries, and to enforce its decisions, might have a chance to save us in time from an eco-catastrophe.

Global environmental governance will certainly be an issue at the Summit of the Future in 2024, so this panel will show its importance as critical to addressing these existential environmental threats.

Three highly qualified speakers will address different aspects of Global Environmental Governance:

- Tahirih Matthee, Interfaith Liaison for the Baha'i Office of Public Affairs, South Africa
- Joachim Monkelbaan, Lead, Climate Trade, World Economic Forum
- Arthur Lyon Dahl, President, International Environment Forum, and steering committee member and expert for the Climate Governance Commission

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_OXqjj02pSG2jQiYfVMcgow

21 September 8:30am EDT / 2:30 pm CEST

Global Solidarity Accountability: Values for Well-being

As a contribution to the discourse on ways of measuring progress beyond GDP, ebbf-Ethical Business Building the Future and the International Environment Forum have led a project to explore dimensions of well-being that could be measured in non-financial ways. These include the environmental dimensions of energy and climate change, biodiversity, and pollution and waste; basic human needs to eliminate poverty, provide adequate food, and ensure good health; and social dimensions including work and service, knowledge and education, and ethical and spiritual values. The results can be useful both to contribute to the beyond GDP discourse at the UN Summit of the Future in 2024, and for community conversations to read the local reality and undertake social actions.

This event will begin with an **Overview of the Global Solidarity Accounting Project** by Dr. Arthur Dahl, IEF President and retired senior official of UNEP, who originated the GSA project. Dr. Laurent Mesbah will then highlight the **Environmental Aspects of Global Solidarity Accountability**.

These presentations will be followed by **case studies** of applications to discourse and social action in local communities and a discussion of lessons learned:

- Community Conversations for Global Solidarity, Canada
- Ontario Social Action project
- Community consultations on well-being in Champel, Geneva, Switzerland
- Well-being as Wealth in the Eindhoven Region, the Netherlands

Register here: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XGY7m98WSn6f4JWMxEnF2w

22 September 1pm EDT / 7 pm CEST

Where Do We Go from Here?

In this final event of our 2023 conference, volunteers will summarize what we've learned from the results of the UN meetings and explore what they mean for our future action in support of the preparations for the Summit of the Future in 2024. Participants will discuss how to implement this in their daily lives. Suggest and learn about activities and concrete steps you can take home to your communities, family, and friends.

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF2023-ConferenceClosing>

For the full conference program with speaker information, go here: <https://iefworld.org/conf27>



A Second Charter: Imagining a Renewed United Nations


**A High-Level UNGA 2023 Side Event
Tuesday, 19 September 2023**

The Global Governance Forum and the Baha'i International Community's United Nations Office are organising a UN Charter Reform event taking place on 19 September 2023 at the Baha'i International Community offices in New York and online, co-sponsored by the International Environment Forum in complement to the [27th IEF Annual Conference](#). This three-session event builds on a [call](#), signed by over 400 prominent individuals including 20 Nobel Laureates, and an initial [statement](#) drafted by an informal group of academics, former government and United Nations officials, and civil society representatives. You can join online for any or all of the three sessions taking place throughout the day by registering [here](#).

While UN Charter reform has been a topic of consideration since the establishment of the United Nations, recent events including preparations for the Summit of the Future and the endorsement of an Article 109 conference in the [report](#) of the High Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, give new impetus to the issue.

This event - [preliminary agenda here](#) - will advance this conversation. The three panels for the day will focus on Collective Security and Disarmament, Sustainable Futures, and Imagining a Renewed United Nations. The confirmed speakers include the President of Club de Madrid Danilo Turk, former President of the General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa, former UN Ambassador Amanda Ellis, Dr. Youssef Mahmoud, and Professors Daniel Deudney, Thomas Weiss, and Andrew Strauss, among others.

Scroll down to p. 7 to read an article about the new statement by the Global Governance Forum on *A Second Charter: Imagining a Renewed United Nations*.



DRC House of Worship: Peaceful environs inspire thoughtful discussion on the environment

Baha'i World News



KINSHASA, Democratic Republic of the Congo — Within the serene setting of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Kinshasa, a vibrant discussion on humanity's relationship with the natural world unfolded.

A gathering organized by the Bahá'í Office of External Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo marked a special moment at the national level when government representatives, academics, civil society organizations, representatives of faith communities, and traditional leaders from throughout the country sat together to discuss environmental issues.



Image: Attendees gathered for a group photo at the end of the discussion, which was organized by the Bahá'í Office of External Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Credit: Baha'i World News Service

Christian Lupemba, a member of the Office of External Affairs, emphasized the importance of fostering a shared vision among these social actors. "Given the complexities of environmental issues," he said, "no single entity can tackle these challenges alone. If we put our minds

together, we can reach more effective solutions."

Discussions drew inspiration from the Bahá'í International Community's statement [One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World](#).

Some of the themes highlighted in the BIC statement and explored by participants included the essential principle of humanity's oneness as the foundation on which a sustainable society can be built and how to foster consensus in action through consultation, particularly in relation to increasing the participation of women in decision-making forums.

Faïda Chantal, a prominent social actor, spoke about barriers that prevent women from greater involvement in discussions concerning the environment. "We must ensure that women have equal access to the same information and opportunities as men," she said, citing this as one of the reasons that women can be absent from decision-making forums.

Ms. Chantal further noted that the "cultural, institutional, and economic obstacles that women face" are in fact obstacles that prevent the progress of society.

Attendees expressed their appreciation for the gathering, noting that the environs of the temple provided a setting conducive to contemplation and an atmosphere that inspired rich discussion and deep interaction.

Laurent Kidinda, a representative from the Ministry of Social Affairs stated: "The House of Worship is unlike any other structure. When you enter the temple, you are overcome by an inner peace. You are attracted to stay, to pray, and to reflect deeply about the progress of Congolese society."

This gathering was the first in a series of discussions planned by the Office of External Affairs to take place on the grounds of the newly inaugurated temple to explore issues of national concern.

SOURCE: <https://news.bahai.org/story/1689/>

Translations of *One Planet, One Habitation*

As the grave effects of surpassing planetary limits become increasingly apparent, from climate change to biodiversity loss to environmental degradation and pollution, humanity is being compelled to develop more mature, collaborative, and constructive relationships between its peoples and with the natural environment.

Baha'i International Community, *One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World*

The Baha'i International Community wrote a significant statement [One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World](#). It raises our consciousness about the importance of living in harmony with nature, both as individuals and communities, and it proposes fundamental shifts in mindsets and practical actions that can assist humankind in addressing the existential threats of the environmental crisis. It helps us grasp the complexities of the topic and explains how the concept of the spiritual nature of the human being and the principles of oneness, justice, and moderation are prerequisites for an environmentally sustainable civilization.



We have previously featured this statement in our newsletter. Here, we want to tell you the story about its **translation into German** which was just recently posted [here](#). The translation took almost a year of collaborative effort between Paula Justine van den Boogaart from the Environmental Interest Group of the German speaking Association of Baha'is Studies (ABS), IEF member Christine Muller, and German NSA translation team member Janet Rawling-Keitel. They reported "We critically examined the translation sentence by sentence and consulted in long and lively Zoom meetings about difficult sentences and words. When we were done, we started all over again, and in the second round found equally many spots that needed improvement! The third round was quicker. At the end, we asked Dr. Ingo Hoffmann and Dr. Thomas Floeth from the ABS Environmental Interest Group to proofread the translation, and they pointed to a few words that still needed more work. It was a great learning experience, and we are very happy that the statement is now available to the German speaking world!"

The statement has previously been translated into [Romanian](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#), and [Arabic](#). We encourage the IEF community to initiate translations into other languages!



A Second Charter Imagining a Renewed United Nations Statement by the Global Governance Forum

[Download the full Statement](#) (pdf)

The Global Governance Forum has issued a Statement *A Second Charter: Imagining a Renewed United Nations* that makes significant proposals to include the environment and the common good of the Earth System explicitly in a revised United Nations Charter. Some IEF members have contributed to this effort. The environmental sections are quoted below.

Excerpts from the Executive Summary

Virtually all of the major global catastrophic risks we face today are linked to the inability of the human institutions that were created out of the chaos and destruction of World War II to adapt to the demands of a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. This is a key driver of virtually all of the major global catastrophic risks we face today. Stakeholders from around the globe—including scholars, government officials, civil society organizations and young people—are calling for a renewed and more equitable United Nations that can address these broader threats to global security. A UN Charter Review conference to ensure that the organization remains relevant and effective in the 21st century, leading to a Second UN Charter, is now both feasible and necessary.

The Charter embedded the "promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples" as a responsibility of the international community, and UN agencies have played a prominent role in contributing to a sharp increase in life expectancy, a doubling of literacy rates worldwide, bringing millions out of poverty in some regions, and ensuring more opportunities for women and girls. However, the reality of our world since the UN's founding is that the consumption of resources is pushing the earth systems beyond planetary boundaries, the world's biodiversity is in substantial decline, extremes of wealth and poverty have widened, a combination of greed and unsustainable debt burdens threatens our integrated global economy and financial system, and human rights and social cohesion are fracturing. Both human and planetary systems are frighteningly close to tipping points of irreversible changes and accelerating breakdown.

The upcoming UN Summit of the Future in September 2024 is an opportune moment to advance UN Charter review, and to put forward serious proposals on ways to modernize the UN. Some insist that revising the UN Charter is politically impossible, but the alternative is unacceptable. The enormous suffering likely to result from the perpetuation of the status quo - deepening

inequalities, accelerating climate catastrophe, and the insatiable acquisition of more and deadlier weapons of war that increasingly put our future at risk.

Management of the Earth System

One of the most significant gaps in the UN Charter is the absence of any reference to the environment. While it was not a security issue in 1945, environmental crises including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste have become existential global challenges today. Our essential needs for food, water and shelter are in danger. For example, rising seas from climate change pose unthinkable risks to billions around the world, creating new sources of instability and conflict, with profound implications for security, international law, human rights and the very fabric of societies, with ever-fiercer competition for fresh water, land and other resources, as low-lying communities and entire countries disappear forever, with mass population exodus on a staggering scale. All these problems are interrelated in a single Earth system. Urgent action is needed to address such loss and damage. Fortunately, solutions exist, and the means are there; it is the political will to implement what has already been agreed that is lacking, with no real accountability and liability for those most responsible. The world must rapidly adopt system-wide transformations to secure a sustainable, climate-resilient future.

A renewed UN Charter must recognise Earth system management as a fifth pillar of the UN alongside peace and security, human rights, rule of law, and social and economic development, and extend global governance to meaningfully cover these issues. The complex planetary system that we call the biosphere—including all life and the physical conditions that make life possible—provides ecosystem services and common goods that are beyond national jurisdiction and not valued in the economy. Maintaining a climate optimal for human existence is one of them. A materialistic society where production for profit drives a culture of consumption, combined with rapid population growth, have pushed human impact far beyond many of the scientifically established planetary boundaries for continued survival, undermining the natural capital upon which we depend for our very existence, as well as our human right to a healthy, clean, sustainable environment.

Regarding these threats, the biggest governance gap today is at the global level, where the environmental risks of catastrophe are the most threatening and the least managed, despite a multiplicity of multilateral environmental agreements, all essentially voluntary and without enforcement. The best efforts of motivated countries are neutralized by those defending vested interests or who prioritize the short term over the existential threats to the Earth system. Experience demonstrates that this area, as much as any other, requires that we give the UN the capacity to pass binding legislation to protect our planetary environmental system and the common goods it provides, with the necessary enforcement and dispute settlement mechanisms.

In a world where non-state actors including multinational corporations are major drivers of resource extraction, unsustainable production, and unlimited pollution and waste generation illustrating the tragedy of the commons, such legislation should extend to all contributors to environmental degradation. Multi-stakeholder approaches are needed involving all those willing to contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

Science should be the basis for policy-making in this area. It has defined the urgency to make a fundamental transformation in the many dimensions of our economy and human society, before we are overwhelmed by the climate crisis or other catastrophes. Only through empowered, conscientious global governance mechanisms based on science, in the spirit of true global solidarity, can we hope to make the necessary changes to save our planetary home. These might include a global environment agency or a Global Resilience Council. There will also be a role for a dispute settlement and justice mechanism, as illustrated by the recent Vanuatu-led request to the International Court of Justice.

Given the urgency of action to address the rapidly growing impact of climate change, a possible first step towards the acceptance of binding global legislation could be to give the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) with its universal membership the authority to legislate to protect planetary boundaries as defined by science. It would set the planetary limits for greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, and equitably allocate responsibility to countries and other entities for emission reductions to return to and remain within those limits. The same could be done for other planetary boundaries, such as biosphere integrity, land system change, excess use of nitrate and phosphorus, and plastic and other novel entities. A scientific advisory mechanism for the Earth system as a whole would need to be created. Since the UNEA is an existing body, no Charter revision would be required.

SOURCE: <https://globalgovernanceforum.org/>



Call for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

Multi-faith Letter

Grassroots people of faith and leaders of religious institutions representing more than 1.5 billion persons have joined many others in calling for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty to take action against the primary cause of global heating and climate change. They released a multi-faith letter (below), which has been endorsed by the International Environment Forum.

MULTIFAITH LETTER

As leaders across diverse religious and spiritual communities around the globe, we call on governments to develop and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We have been granted a gift, an earth created in all its diversity, vitality, and abundance, for which we are called upon to be stewards. But this role of stewardship has been overshadowed by neglect, exploitation, and unsustainable consumption that threaten the natural balance, social harmony, and existence of life on earth.

Too many coal mines and oil and gas wells are already under production, setting the world on course to fail to meet the Paris Agreement's goal of 1.5°C. To avoid the worst impacts of the climate crisis, we must hold ourselves, our neighbors, and our governments accountable and collectively act.

For too long, government action has been painstakingly slow and catered too much to the reckless and deceptive fossil fuel corporations, preventing meaningful and timely climate legislation. There is a glaring disconnect between countries' approvals for continued fossil fuel expansion and their rhetoric proclaiming long-term 'net zero' targets, a dangerous veil to evade responsibility, delay action, and rely on unproven technologies.

The burning of coal, oil, and gas is responsible for 86% of CO₂ emissions in the past decade, according to the IPCC. Just 100 companies account for more than 70% of emissions. With these emissions also come the costs of local pollution, environmental degradation, and health impacts associated with extracting, refining, transporting, and burning fossil fuels.

These costs are disproportionately paid by those who are most vulnerable to, and least historically responsible for, the consequences of climate change - lives lost, homes and farms destroyed, and millions of people displaced. It is our moral imperative to protect those most in need and to uphold the human rights of future generations by employing clean and sustainable sources of energy.

The science surrounding the most urgent danger facing humanity is undeniable: to be good caretakers of our common home, we must act and phase out the production of fossil fuels. Several faith institutions around the world have already divested from fossil fuel companies, now we take the next step in calling on governments to plan a global just transition.

The current scale of the climate crisis requires a cooperative global solution that addresses the fossil fuel industry directly. We call on governments to urgently commence negotiations to develop and implement a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, laying out a binding global plan to:

1. End expansion of any new coal, oil or gas production in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Programme;
2. Phase-out existing production of fossil fuels in a manner that is fair and equitable, taking into account the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and their capacity to transition;
3. Ensure a global just transition to 100% access to renewable energy globally, support dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels, and enable all people and communities, not least the Global South, to flourish.

We hail from many faiths and beliefs, but together we can remedy the decades of negligence to safeguard our coexistence with this earth. Just as our beliefs are entrenched in religious and spiritual teachings, our response to the climate crisis must be deeply rooted in science and equity to heal the planet and people alike.

We have a narrow window of opportunity to act which is why we are joining the growing chorus of Indigenous Peoples, civil society leaders, youth, cities, lawmakers, academics, and scientists calling for a global treaty to phase out fossil fuels and support a just transition powered by clean energy and a sustainable future for all.

SOURCE: <https://fossilfueltreaty.org/faith-letter>



International Court of Justice preparing advisory opinion on climate change

29 March 2023, updated 4 September 2023

At the request of the UN General Assembly the International Court of Justice is now considering an advisory opinion on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, and it has established a website for all the documentation submitted concerning the potential advisory opinion. The website is <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/187>.

On 29 March 2023 the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution seeking an advisory opinion on climate change and human rights from the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

This was a milestone moment in a campaign launched over two years ago by the Pacific Island Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), in a law school classroom in Vanuatu.

It was taken forward as a diplomatic endeavor by the Government of Vanuatu who worked alongside a core group of 18 nations to prepare the first draft of the resolution, and ultimately won the backing of over 120 countries before it was tabled in the UN on 29 March. The adoption by consensus for an advisory opinion from the ICJ is unprecedented.

An advisory opinion from the ICJ will provide clarity to States on their obligations under international law to protect their people, now and in the future, from climate impacts and their responsibility in upholding fundamental human rights.

While non-binding in nature, it will add weight to efforts to hold governments accountable on their climate promises and strengthen climate negotiations in multilateral fora, and it can be cited in climate litigation.

The General Assembly decision was a significant diplomatic moment for Vanuatu and Pacific Island nations who have a strong legacy in climate leadership. For instance, Vanuatu and small island developing states have long championed the need for a Loss and Damage fund – which came to fruition at COP27- and more recently led a six-nation Pacific pledge, ‘Port Vila call’, to phase out of fossil fuels and called for a global Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“This is not a silver bullet but it can make an important contribution to climate action. The world is at a crossroads and we as the international community have the obligation to take greater action. Together we can send a loud and clear message into the future that on this very day the people of the United Nations acting through their governments decided to leave behind their differences and act together to tackle the challenge of climate change,” said H.E. Ishmael Kalsakau, Prime Minister of Vanuatu, as he introduced the draft resolution at the UN plenary hall.

SOURCE: <https://climatenetwork.org/2023/03/29/major-climate-diplomacy-breakthro...> with updates.



Image: Rivière-à-Pierre, QC, Canada, Credit: [J-Photos](#), Unsplash