



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.

Members Corner

The IEF warmly welcomes the following new members and associates:

Members

Friedrich Affolter, Switzerland
Uros Popadic, Serbia

Associates

Gabriel Porch, USA
Thomas Habanabakize, Rwanda
Wali Muhammad Memon, Pakistan
Shashwat Jain, India

Image: Zentangle by IEF associate Edith Rose who passed away this fall.



IEF Webinars

By IEF Webinar Coordinator Khela Baskettt

23rd IEF Webinar

Saturday, 6 January 2024, 1pm EST, 7pm CET

Reflections on COP28 and Ideas for Moving Forward

Speakers: Halldór Thorgeirsson, Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Rosie Poirier, Arthur Dahl

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF-COP28>

Arthur Dahl will speak on “Bringing values into COP28: Bahá’í International Community”

The Bahá’í International Community is well engaged in COP28, organising a "Values Roadshow" with other organisations, contributing to events, and networking among the many Bahá’ís participating in COP28 in various capacities. Faith groups and interfaith activities will be significant at COP28.

Bio: Arthur Dahl, President of the International Environment Forum and a retired senior official of UNEP, collaborates frequently with the Bahá’í International Community, and has participated in previous COPs.

Rosie Poirier will speak on “Communications & Cross-Sector Collaboration at COP28”

Cross-sector collaboration stands as a cornerstone in the global effort to tackle climate change. The multifaceted and interconnected nature of climate challenges demands a united front, bringing together governments, businesses, NGOs, academia, and communities. Policy and top-down efforts need to meet grassroots initiatives and bottom up approaches. Here, storytelling, filmmaking, and communications emerge as powerful catalysts for promoting cross-sector collaboration at COP28, forging a collective narrative that transcends boundaries and mobilizes diverse stakeholders. Effective communications humanize climate challenges, making them accessible and foster unified action.

Bio: Rosie Poirier is a marine scientist, underwater photographer and an artist. She works primarily in the field of sustainable resource management and conservation. She focuses on accelerating programs of action in the sustainability sector working with both non-profits and industry.

Halldór Thorgeirsson, who was actively involved in the COP, and **Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen** will share their fresh experiences and insights during the webinar.

Recordings of the last two webinars

21st IEF Webinar 4 November 2023

Part 1:

Pascal Molineaux: Junior Youth Ecological Camps in Colombia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YzHEMYDwyfY&t=2263s>

Part 2:

Bill and Aaron Kelly: Second Annual Environment Fair Ottawa Cluster Environment

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEumasfRNps&t=45s>

22nd IEF Webinar 2 December 2023

Christine Muller: The Concept of Liberty in the Baha'i Teachings and its Application for Environmental Sustainability

Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SxBzdHzJ9N0>

View or download the [presentation as pdf](#)

We thank IEF members Bill and Aaron Kelly for editing the recordings of the webinars.
For information about and recording links to previous webinars, see the [IEF Webinar Page](#).

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change 28th Conference of the Parties

Dubai, UAE, 30 November-13 December 2023

<https://unfccc.int/cop28>

Host country website: <https://www.cop28.com/en/>



COP28 was a crucial meeting for action on climate change, as the UN warns that a radical transformation is now required. Country positions were far apart, with many, including the most vulnerable and those listening to the science, insisting on a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels, while the oil-producing countries refused any mention of fossil fuels. Complex negotiations throughout the night pushed the conference a day overtime.

At 11:15 GST on 13 December 2023, a wave of thunderous applause swept through the halls of COP 28 as Parties to the Paris Agreement formally adopted the decision text on the first-ever Global Stocktake with no objections. The following is part of the statement of the COP President.

"We have delivered a comprehensive response to the global stocktake. We have delivered a robust action plan to keep 1.5c in reach. It is a balanced plan that addresses emissions... it is built on common ground. It is strengthened by full inclusivity. It is a historic package to accelerate climate action. It is the UAE consensus.

"Many said this could not be done. When I spoke to you at the very start, I promised a different sort of Cop, private and public sectors... everyone came together from day one. Everyone united, acted and delivered. We operationalised loss and damage and filled the fund. We delivered world first after world first.

"It is built on common ground, it is strengthened by full inclusivity. It is enhanced, balanced but make no mistake, a historic package.

"For the first time, to deliver on methane and emissions. We have language on fossil fuels in our final agreement for the first time ever.

"Let me sound a word of caution. Any agreement is only as good as its implementation. We are what we do, not what we say. We must turn this agreement into tangible action. If we unite, we can have a profound effect on all of our futures. Inclusivity kept us going in the difficult days. Everyone has been heard, from Indigenous peoples or youth to global south.

"We have reframed the conversation around climate finance. We have integrated the real economy into the climate challenge."

- Sultan Al Jaber, COP 28 President

SOURCE: <https://app.wedonthavetime.org/posts/65d6762b-55b3-4a24-83b2-fee145b042...>

This newsletter cannot provide a full report on COP28, especially of the formal negotiations and outcome, but it does share some of the highlights of events of interest to IEF. With 70,000 participants in Dubai, including over 40 Bahá'ís and several IEF members, our report illustrates efforts to bring a values perspective to the public discourse on climate change, especially through the Bahá'í International Community and the Climate Governance Commission with which the IEF collaborates.

A video of COP28 on 11 December with IEF board member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen gives us a glimpse of the “inside” of the conference: https://www.instagram.com/reel/C0tgY_5J-7X/

See the [IEF COP28](#) page for some reports that are highly relevant to the IEF.

Here are just a few highlights:

BIC Events

BIC and the Climate Governance Commission hosted a half day activity on 7 December with some 70 people visiting a mosque, a sustainable city innovation and a dinner with meaningful conversations. IEF was one of the sponsoring organisations next to a long list of others.

To learn about the many events co-sponsored by the Baha'i International Community, go to the [IEF COP28](#) page.



Baha'is participating in the first week of COP28

The COP Drop with Dan Perell

Faiths for Biodiversity, the COP Drop, **2 December** with Dan Perell, BIC, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zYoZ7K0uM8>

Faiths for Biodiversity, the COP Drop, **11 December**, with Dan Perell, BIC, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaTC7B-YGuc>

See the summary on the IEF website.

Governing Our Planetary Emergency: Key perspectives and proposals from the report

After the November 28th launch of the Report, "[Governing Our Planetary Emergency](#)," of the Climate Governance Commission, chaired by Mary Robinson, Johan Rockström, and María Fernanda Espinosa, experts invited by the Climate Governance Commission (CGC), with a special focus on youth, discussed key perspectives and proposals from the report. See the summary on the IEF website.

Watch recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIn0oTUb96M>

10 Must-haves Initiative - Panel Discussion

Led by Peter Schlosser and Johan Rockström, this dialogue explored the pivotal role of the [10 Must-haves Initiative](#) in international climate policy negotiations, fostering knowledge exchange and accelerating collective action for a sustainable and thriving future. See the summary on the IEF website.

Recording at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jl3PrjmE8J4>

IEF Board News

In its 30 November 2023 meeting, the IEF Board decided to become a co-sponsoring organization of **Mobilizing an Earth Governance Alliance** (MEGA). MEGA is a coalition of civil society organizations working in cooperation with like-minded governments and other stakeholders to strengthen existing environmental governance mechanisms and establish additional mechanisms. Earth's ecosystems are being destroyed by poorly governed economic development and international competition. Global environmental governance is essential to transcend national interests and protect earth's ecosystems for current and future generations.

Check out their website here: <https://earthgovernance.org/about/>

On 7 December 2023, the IEF **signed the COP28 Faith Pavilion Call to Action**.

For the full text of this Call to Action, go here: <https://iefworld.org/COP28interfaith>

To read its introductory paragraphs, see next article on *Faith for Climate: A Call to Action*.

Faith for Climate: A Call to Action

Inspired by the Interfaith Statement signed by Pope Francis, Ahmed El-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, and around 30 religious leaders and representatives from a range of traditions, launched on December 3, the Faith Pavilion at COP28 puts forth this Call to Action:

We come from different faiths, religions, and spiritual backgrounds. We come from the North and the South, from the East and the West. We represent different communities, united in our longing for a more sustainable and inclusive world.

Though we come from varied traditions, we understand that the climate crisis is fundamentally a human crisis. Human actions, distorted by vices such as greed and selfishness, have brought humanity and the planet to the brink of disaster. By cultivating healthy values, which are taught and

practiced in our traditions, we can find balance, and heal our common life, and protect Mother Earth.

Our common values inspire and unite us in our efforts to combat the human-made climate crisis and to nurture the sacredness and well-being of all life on Earth. Love for our world and for each other, and awareness of our interconnectedness, underpin our understanding and our commitment to urgent action.

Every sector of human endeavor – government, multilateral entities, business, health care systems, educational, cultural and artistic institutions – all contribute to the good effort needed now to bring about balance and healing. The religions of the world do not own spiritual values, but they make them the center of their lives. The religious communities bring to the work of climate action and advocacy, among other contributions, their values. This call to action expresses several areas of climate justice that are urgent. No less urgent is the call for us to change our thinking and replace our unhealthy values with those that lead to an integrated, balanced life, a life shared with all people and species.

[Go here](#) to read the full Interfaith Call to Action.



Interfaith Environmental Events in Sweden

By IEF member Cedric Åkermark

Panel Discussion: “How can we redefine our relationship with nature” at the Gothenburg Book Fair

Gothenburg Book Fair in Gothenburg, Sweden, is the largest cultural event in the Nordic countries and is held every year on the last weekend of September. The fair, with around 80,000 visitors each year, brings together publishers, NGOs, and social actors from Sweden and around the world. The Swedish Bahá'í community has for many years participated as an exhibitor at the fair.

This year, two panel discussions were organized by the Office of External Affairs of the Bahá'ís of Sweden, one of which was titled: “How can we redefine our relationship with nature”. This panel consisted of David Thurfjell, author and professor in religious studies; IEF member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, associate professor at Wageningen University; and Shahram Mansoori, chairman of the Swedish Interfaith Council. IEF member Cedric Åkermark moderated the discussion.

The conversation started with the panel members sharing fond memories they had from being in nature, highlighting how close the natural world was to their hearts, and how highly they valued moments when they were in nature. David Thurfjell has studied and written multiple books on the relationship of the Swedish people to religion and nature. He started the discussion by sharing how important nature was for the spiritual and existential life of the Swedish people as well as how nature has taken the role of giving guidance and meaning to the life of many people.

Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen continued the conversation by sharing some experiences from her research and engagement in IEF on how science and faith together could recast our relationship with nature. Shahram Mansoori highlighted how faith communities were important actors in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Swedish society and could help contribute to recasting relationships with nature in thought and action. He shared the booklet: “Our Planet, Our Faith” published by the Interfaith Council consisting of texts from thirteen different faiths, spurring people on to protect the environment.

The conversation fostered insights of how mutual dependence between all organisms was necessary for humanity's collective future and concluded with a collective appreciation of the

important role that science and faith have in building more mature and constructive relationships between humanity and nature.

The Bahá'í community also had a booth where many meaningful conversations were had about the Bahá'í Faith and its perspective on humanity's relationship with nature. At the booth there was an activity where visitors could write which ethical values they thought were necessary to be favorable stewards of our planet. In addition, the Baha'i International Community (BIC) statement: "One Planet, One Habitation" was translated into Swedish for the occasion and distributed to those who were interested.

This panel discussion and participation at the Gothenburg Book Fair was a great leap in the capacity of Sweden to contribute to the public discourse on the environment. The role of faith on recasting human relationship with the natural world could prove to be a fruitful way of touching the souls of many people in Sweden, a country with a strong environmental movement.

This event has especially been valuable for collaborating among the different faith communities. A week after the Gothenburg Book Fair, a local interfaith council in the city of Örebro organized a theme day on "Faith, Hope, and the Climate Crisis". During this day representatives from multiple faith communities came together for talks, workshops, and discussions. IEF member Cedric Åkermark held a workshop based on the BIC statement: "One Planet, One Habitation" and participated in one of the panel discussions. The day ended with a strong feeling of unity and hope with many of the participants sharing how they were inspired to find new ways to act in their daily lives to improve the planet.

November Panel on Food, Faith, and Planetary Boundaries

In the end of November, Åkermark participated in a panel discussion on the theme: "Food, Faith, and Planetary Boundaries" co-organized by the Swedish Interfaith Council and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). Through its discussions the panelists, representing members of different Faiths, found many similarities in their attitudes towards food, Faith and planetary boundaries, including the preference of a vegetarian diet, the realization that there cannot be indefinite growth on a limited planet, the need to bring people closer to food production and the importance of working with youth.



Governing Our Planetary Emergency Charting a Safe Path for a Workable Future

A Statement by the
Climate Governance Commission

The Climate Governance Commission has issued a Statement entitled *Governing Our Planetary Emergency: Charting a Safe Path for a Workable Future*, released for the UN General Assembly High-Level Week and Climate Week 18-22 September 2023. It is available [here](#).

In the Statement, members of the Commission, co-chaired by Mary Robinson, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, and Johan Rockström, summarize ideas from their full report issued in time for COP-28 in Dubai, *Governing Our Planetary Emergency*, on pioneering a system-wide approach to solving the climate crisis while advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. By working with diverse partners and contributing to smart coalitions of governments, civil society groups, cities, businesses, and others worldwide, the Climate Governance Commission aims to advance innovative solutions in the near and medium-term, to catalyze a shift in global governance and provide a practical path forward for ambitious and doable climate action.

As the Statement notes: The world faces a deepening planetary emergency – and is on a reckless path toward catastrophic climate change – having already over-stepped six of nine scientifically-identified [planetary boundaries](#). A continued failure to address the underlying causes of this [emergency](#) – such as fossil fuel-based economies, resource waste/overconsumption and the destruction of nature – will have further devastating effects for all of humanity, triggering potentially irreversible tipping points, with dangerous consequences for planetary stability, both social and ecological. A system-wide approach to solving the climate crisis is required now, ensuring reliable climate and planetary boundary governance for the Earth as a whole.

The Commission makes ten short-term proposals:

1. Urgent Improvement of Climate COPs to Focus on Delivery, Action, and Accountability
2. Declaration of Planetary Emergency, Planetary Emergency Platform, and Broadening International Security Paradigms
3. Transformative Action and Accountability of Powerful Actors
4. Enhance International Scientific Capacity for Earth System Governance
5. Elevate Environmental Governance within the Multilateral System and MEA Accountability
6. International Economic/Financial Measures
7. Better use of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), International Law, and UN Human Rights Council, and Facilitate Citizen Participation
8. Connecting Trade and International Investment Law with Climate/Planetary Ecological Priorities
9. Business as a Force for Good while holding it Environmentally Accountable
10. Boosting “Next Generation” City and Regional Alliances

In addition, it proposes five deeper reforms:

1. A Global Environment Agency (GEA)
2. An International Court for the Environment
3. Institutional Reform of the Global Financial System
4. UN Charter Reform
5. Other Key Medium-term International Institutional Reforms

The Climate Governance Commission is convened by IEF member Maja Groff and several IEF members have contributed to its work. The proposal for a [Global Environment Agency](#) was prepared by IEF board members Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Arthur Dahl.

Nurturing Communities through Gardening

The Agriculture Working Group of the Association for Bahá'í Studies offers a Webinar:

Sunday, December 31 at 1:00pm EST / 7pm CET

Speakers: Carolyn Jennings, Rose Jennings and Valerie Goerlitz-Ramirez

For the past few decades, Val, Carolyn and Rose have been learning about the benefits of gardening on health and well-being and how to involve children and community members in the act of gardening. Val led gardening activities at the Boys and Girls Club in the Valley in Texas. Carolyn has run children's gardens as a schoolteacher and is currently leading a donation plot at her community garden in San Marcos, Texas. Rose has helped to found and run a community garden in Austin, Texas. All three women have learned a lot and continue to learn from these experiences. They are excited to share past/present/future highlights with you and learn from others'

experiences about community involvement in gardening as it relates to building a future society based on Bahá'í principles.

How to join the webinar: Subscribers to the ABS Agriculture Group Mailchimp page will receive an announcement with the link the week before presentations. People are free to unsubscribe at any time. Sign up here to receive a link: <https://agriculture-working-group.mailchimpsites.com/>



The 2023 state of the climate report: Entering uncharted territory

William J. Ripple et al.

The Alliance of World Scientists that issues Scientists' Warnings has just published its 2023 state of the climate report. The following is a summary of the conclusions of the report. You should refer to the [full report](#) for more details, references and telling graphics.

The effects of global warming are progressively more severe, and possibilities such as a worldwide societal breakdown are feasible and dangerously under explored. By the end of this century, an estimated 3 to 6 billion individuals—approximately one-third to one-half of the global population—might find themselves confined beyond the livable region, encountering severe heat, limited food availability, and elevated mortality rates because of the effects of climate change. Big problems need big solutions. Therefore, we must shift our perspective on the climate emergency from being just an isolated environmental issue to a systemic, existential threat. Although global heating is devastating, it represents only one aspect of the escalating and interconnected environmental crisis that we are facing (e.g., biodiversity loss, fresh water scarcity, pandemics). We need policies that target the underlying issues of ecological overshoot where the human demand on Earth's resources results in over exploitation of our planet and biodiversity decline. As long as humanity continues to exert extreme pressure on the Earth, any attempted climate-only solutions will only redistribute this pressure.

The over exploitation of our planet shows that endless growth and over consumption by rich countries and individuals is unsustainable and unjust. We advocate for reducing resource over consumption; reducing, reusing, and recycling waste in a more circular economy; and prioritizing human flourishing and sustainability. We emphasize climate justice and fair distribution of the costs and benefits of climate action, particularly for vulnerable communities. We call for a transformation of the global economy to prioritize human well-being and to provide for a more equitable distribution of resources. We also call to stabilize and gradually decrease the human population with gender justice through voluntary family planning and by supporting woman's and girls' education and rights, which reduces fertility rates and raises the standard of living. These environmentally conscious and socially equitable strategies necessitate far-reaching and holistic transformations in the long run that could be achieved through gradual but significant steps in the short term.

As scientists, we are increasingly being asked to tell the public the truth about the crises we face in simple and direct terms. The truth is that we are shocked by the ferocity of the extreme weather events in 2023. We are afraid of the uncharted territory that we have now entered. Conditions are going to get very distressing and potentially unmanageable for large regions of the world, with the 2.6°C warming expected over the course of the century, even if the self-proposed national emissions reduction commitments of the Paris Agreement are met. We warn of potential collapse of natural and socioeconomic systems in such a world where we will face unbearable heat, frequent extreme weather events, food and fresh water shortages, rising seas, more emerging diseases, and increased social unrest and geopolitical conflict. Massive suffering due to climate change is already here, and we have now exceeded many safe and just Earth system boundaries,

imperiling stability and life-support systems. As we will soon bear witness to failing to meet the Paris agreement's aspirational 1.5°C goal, the significance of immediately curbing fossil fuel use and preventing every further 0.1°C increase in future global heating cannot be overstated. Rather than focusing only on carbon reduction and climate change, addressing the underlying issue of ecological overshoot will give us our best shot at surviving these challenges in the long run. This is our moment to make a profound difference for all life on Earth, and we must embrace it with unwavering courage and determination to create a legacy of change that will stand the test of time.

We Must Face the Risks to the World's Future – Now

By Arthur Lyon Dahl and Augusto Lopez-Claros

Any realistic view of our present global situation must acknowledge that we are experiencing rapid political, social, and environmental deterioration.

Unfortunately, parallels to the storm clouds that gathered before World War II are not without merit, but we must add in digital risks, climate change, and other eco-catastrophes.

The world is re-arming; xenophobia, extremism and autocratic governance are on the rise, and a growing number of countries, some of them large and powerful in various ways, appear to be setting aside long-held norms that conduced at least to a sense of stability, if not necessarily prosperity. All of these trends were anticipated in the Baha'i [writings](#) long ago, as in this warning to the world's leaders from Baha'u'llah.

Read the full article here: <https://bahaiteachings.org/we-must-face-risks-worlds-future-now/>

Life story of Richard St.Barbe Baker

Richard St.Barbe Baker was a unique figure promoting environmental protection and forest restoration from the 1920s in Africa, North America, Palestine, Australasia and around the world. IEF has restored the content of a website about this remarkable man and his impact: [Life story of Richard St. Barbe Baker](#) (1889-1983), "Man of the Trees", forester, early environmentalist and Bahá'í.

We all can learn from his example.
