



## 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](mailto: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.

## IEF Webinars

By IEF Webinar Coordinator Khela Baskett

### 25th IEF Webinar

#### Gathering Moss - Discussion

Saturday, 9 March, 2024

10am PST California / 1pm EST New York / 6pm GMT / 7pm CET Central Europe

Register here: <http://tinyurl.com/IEF-GatheringMoss>

Join us for a "Book Club" format for our webinar this month, which is focused on member participation, discussion, and principles we can implement in our lives to live in harmony with our natural world. We'll listen to Dr. Kimmerer read the chapter "Kickapoo" from her book "Gathering Moss." Here, she presents a mystery regarding moss speciation growth along a river bend, and we'll work through how to solve it together.

No need to read beforehand, as we will listen to the audiobook chapter together, but for your reference, here's the book: <https://osupress.oregonstate.edu/book/gathering-moss>

To encourage maximum participation and discussion, "Book Club" Webinars are not recorded.

The recording of last month's webinar on Oceans of Hope with Rosie Poirier is now available here: <https://youtu.be/DrssM82B2R4>

## Members Corner

The IEF warmly welcomes the following new members and associates:

### Members

David Bellamy, USA  
Sina Tabrizi, United Arab Emirates  
Neil Whatley, Canada  
Nasim Rowshan, USA  
Edoardo Tinto, Italy

### Associates

Suvranil Banerjee, India

## IEF Youth Team

The youth team of the International Environment Forum is planning outreach to the wider youth community around the world where there is such deep concern for the climate and environmental crises that threaten their future.

The Youth Team is excited to invite all youth to an **informal gathering on 18 February**.

Please, invite all youth you know who may be interested in this gathering.

It will take place at  
10am PST California  
1pm EST New York  
6pm GMT  
7pm CET Central Europe

Zoom link:  
<http://tinyurl.com/IEF-Youth>



*“The key to resolving these social ills rests in the hands of a youthful generation convinced of the nobility of human beings; eagerly seeking a deeper understanding of the true purpose of existence; able to distinguish between divine religion and mere superstition; clear in the view of science and religion as two independent yet complementary systems of knowledge that propel human progress; conscious of and drawn to the beauty and power of unity in diversity; secure in the knowledge that real glory is to be found in service to one's country and to the peoples of the world; and mindful that the acquisition of wealth is praiseworthy only insofar as it is attained through just means and expended for benevolent purposes, for the promotion of knowledge and toward the common good. Thus must our youth prepare themselves to shoulder the tremendous responsibilities that await them. And thus will they prove immune to the atmosphere of greed that surrounds them and press forward unwavering in the pursuit of their exalted goals.”*

Universal House of Justice, To Baha'is in the Cradle of the Faith, 2 April 2010

## Announcements from the IEF Board

### IEF 9-Year Strategic Plan updated and available on the IEF website

In a collaborative effort, the IEF Board updated its 9-Year Strategic Plan from its original version of 20 February 2022. You can read the 11 February 2024 version here:

<https://iefworld.org/node/1230>

### All Members and Associates: Please, update your User Files if you have not done so in the past six months!

This is easy and quick to do: Just login to the [IEF website](#) to access your account. You will see that these user accounts are greatly improved - they allow you to provide more information about yourself. If you have any trouble with the login, contact the IEF secretariat at [ief@iefworld.org](mailto:ief@iefworld.org)

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## Activities of IEF Members

### IEF Members have contributed to interfaith dialogues on the environment.

- Aaron Kelly spoke on the panel of the Global Sikh Council on 8 February. The topic was **Interfaith Webinar on Faith Perspective of Environment Protection**. Here is a link to the complete four panel presentation and subsequent discussion: <https://youtu.be/M5b2oXRUO5s?si=Q4NmiP6llnFAkzF3> (Aaron's presentation starts at 25:40)
- Christine Muller participated in the program **Baha'i Faith and Environment** on 4 January. This series of lunchtime conversations exploring religion and the environment is organized by Pennsylvania Interfaith Power&Light. The recording of the one-hour program became recently available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MvYysYy1bs&t=2s>

You are all invited to share your activities relevant to IEF with the IEF community. Send the information to [ief@iefworld.org](mailto:ief@iefworld.org).

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## Governance from a Bahá'í perspective

*Excerpts* from an article by IEF President [Arthur Lyon Dahl](#)

Published in [Kosmos Journal Volume 2023 Issue 4](#)

### The challenges of governance today

We are stuck in the trap of national sovereignty, where each nation thinks first of itself and pursues its national interest on the world stage. Even international organisations like the UN have national sovereignty inscribed in their charters. This global anarchy gives full play to the egotistical and power-hungry. It is reinforced by the bankruptcy of political systems at the national level. When government fails to deliver security, well-being, justice and equity to the people, pressures build for change and create civil unrest, opening the door to autocratic rulers, if not failed states.

In addition, governments themselves have been sidelined by the growing power of actors in the economic system that have escaped from national regulation and taxation. Through this system, powerful multinational corporations and financial institutions now control the main levers of power and information at the global level, preventing any efforts to interfere with their projects of economic exploitation to maximize their profits. This feeds corruption, since the materialist value system is driven by greed, lust, indolence, pride and violence, and only pays lip service to higher ethical principles.

These failures of governance have moral roots, and the solution must first be sought at that level (Dahl 2016). Without the right education, our ego and selfish desires dominate. In the absence of any higher purpose, it is easy to be selfish and aggressive, and for many, “you can’t change human nature”. Corruption is an expression of this, as are war, crime, dictatorships and the many other ways that self-interest is expressed in today’s world.

### **Bahá’í concepts of governance**

For Bahá’ís, our material civilization needs to be balanced by a divine civilization based on spiritual principles, acknowledging our higher human purpose and fostering our spiritual evolution. The material side of life is there to give us the means to develop the infinite potential inherent in human consciousness.

Governance should therefore promote unity and justice. With our intensifying global interdependence, the aim today should be governance that reflects and fosters the organic unity of humanity. Our well-being will be achieved through integration and coordination, while appreciating our diversity, not uniformity. “Within human societies, diversity is a source of inspiration, creativity, productivity, resilience, innovation, and adaptation” (ISGP 2012). Justice should be the guiding principle, so that every individual has the opportunity to develop their full potential. Governance should acknowledge that every human being is a trust of the whole, and we have a collective trusteeship for the whole human race (ISGP 2012). In the terms of the UN 2030 Agenda, this means leaving no one behind.

At the most fundamental level, this calls for redefining and reconceptualizing power and authority, beyond self-interested and competitive expressions of power to unifying, cooperative, and mutualistic expressions of power. Bahá’ís propose an alternative concept of power and authority, that is democratic without competition and collective rather than individual. Elections to Bahá’í administrative institutions of nine members at the local, national and international levels are held without nominations, campaigning or partisanship, and those elected have an obligation to serve. Authority is exercised by these institutions through consultative decision-making in a search for truth with reference to spiritual principle. The local and national bodies are presently called Spiritual Assemblies, while the international governing body is the Universal House of Justice.

The members of these institutions are responsible to their own conscience and to God, rather than to those who elected them. There are no individual leaders, avoiding all the problems associated with the corrupting influence of individual power. The aim is loving empowerment, participation and accompaniment of those being administered. Bahá’ís see their system as an embryonic model to be adopted voluntarily when the world sees its advantages, acknowledging that it is not simply institutions and procedures, but that it depends on the requisite values, norms and commitments (ISGP 2012). While developing a system in which unity is the fundamental principle, Bahá’ís abstain from partisan politics, and are loyal to the government wherever they reside.

New models of collective decision making, generally referred to as consultation, are the foundation of this system. This is not disputation and debate driven by ego, ideology, or interest-group competition. Bahá’í consultation seeks out a diversity of views in a search for

the truth, in humble detachment and a spirit of service to the community, referring always to spiritual principles including justice and collective trusteeship. Bahá'í institutions are responsive to feedback from the community, while being shielded from manipulation by special interests. This system of consultation requires patience, maturity, and an attitude of humble learning (ISGP 2012). ...

Given the importance of diversity and subsidiarity in governance in a world of many nations, cultures, environments and economic situations, Bahá'ís operate a system of multilevel governance with Local and National Spiritual Assemblies in almost every country and the Universal House of Justice at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. Each level has considerable autonomy, but decisions can always be appealed to the level above, and guidance and encouragement flow down from the upper levels.

Ultimately, the Bahá'í vision is of a world federal system with executive, legislative and judicial functions and mechanisms for collective security and the equitable distribution of the world's resources. ...

### **Governance and human values**

It is not enough to transform institutions if the people within them have not changed. This requires a transformation in education. Education is what allows culture, science, innovation and social cohesion to develop. It can cultivate the potentials available in each individual, including the emotional capacity for altruism, empathy, solidarity and cooperation, and the spiritual capacity for love, humility, forgiveness, volition, generosity, and self-effacement into a higher collective entity (Dahl 2016). It is this shared morality on which any society must be built, with values that contribute to social cohesion, that favour unity in diversity and leaving no one behind. Many people today, particularly among intellectuals, the young, and those from cultures that retain a sense of collective purpose, still hold to these values and despair at the destructive forces swirling around them, but the faltering or failure of many of the more progressive movements of the left shows that an intellectual attachment to human rights, solidarity, concern for the marginalized, and redistribution of wealth is not sufficient. Movements of the left are just as divided by ego, ambition and the struggle for power as those on the right.

To build capacities for effective governance, we need to educate for altruism and cooperation, and provide moral, intellectual and spiritual education from an early age. Governance requires virtues such as trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, selflessness and humility. In addition, education should develop capacities for self-expression, listening, drawing out the diverse views of marginalized groups, considering new perspectives, appreciating diversity, systematic inquiry, and elevating a discourse to the relevant moral and spiritual principles and being guided by them.

To read the entire article, go here: [https://iefworld.org/ddahl23t\\_governance](https://iefworld.org/ddahl23t_governance)

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## **ebbf – Ethical Business Building the Future**

This year's 34th annual conference of ebbf will take place in Lisbon 16 - 19 May to discuss this big question:

### **How can we elevate business & the economy to serve humanity?**

While the conference is sold out, everyone is still invited to contribute to this topic here: <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7131943267725705216>

## The Many Problems with Shrimp



**Image:** Shrimp in a bowl. Photo by [Daniel Klein](#) on [Unsplash](#)

*New IEF member David Bellamy (DB) shared an illuminating presentation about shrimp with the participants of the recent Wilmette Institute Sustainable Development course. Here is a brief interview about some of the main points from his presentation. The interview is part of the Conversations about Sustainable Living which the Wilmette Institute has included in its newsletter since the beginning of 2017 when Betty Fisher, its editor at the time, asked IEF Board member Christine Muller to write about practical aspects of sustainable living.*

CM: David, what are the problems connected with shrimp production?

DB: The first problem is land use. Most shrimp farms are opened in tropical, coastal wetlands; precious mangrove forests are cut down. Some of their trees are very old, over 100 years. Mangrove forests provide habitat for numerous marine animals that use them for shelter, feeding, and rearing their babies.

CM: It is so important that you show this connection – mangroves are essential for protecting biodiversity. They are also needed for healthy fisheries and therefore for the nutrition and livelihoods of the local population.

What is their importance for the climate?

DB: Mangrove forests have an almost unmatched ability to take CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere and to store it. If you remove it, not only do you lose this reduction in the future, but all the carbon that has been sequestered before will now be released back into the environment. Overall, the carbon footprint of shrimp is huge: To get one pound of frozen shrimp creates one ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. “The carbon footprint of the shrimp from land use is about 10-fold greater than the land use carbon footprint of an equivalent amount of beef produced from a pasture formed from a tropical rainforest.”

CM: Wow, that has a huge impact on the climate!

Talking about the climate, what other benefits do mangrove forests have?

BD: Mangroves serve as barriers to ocean flooding from sea surges and hurricanes.

CM: This is so important to protect coastal communities, and rising sea-levels and stronger storms caused by global warming make the protection of mangroves even more urgent.

Tell us more about shrimp.

DB: I read that “A steady stream of organic waste, chemicals and antibiotics from shrimp farms can pollute groundwater or coastal estuaries.” “The release of antibiotics into natural systems increases resistance among bacteria and threatens human and livestock populations with infection. In addition, the large number of shrimp in crowded condition often results in diseases that are then carried to wild populations.

CM: That all sounds pretty grim. Is there anything positive about shrimp farms?

DB: Increasing shrimp production can help us feed a growing humanity and add protein to some diets that don't get enough now. If the right changes were made in production, the carbon footprint could be significantly reduced. Shrimp producers seem to understand that they must do better, and will try to comply, because they don't want to lose the business. They are hearing from all corners, especially consumers, that if they want us to buy their shrimp, they have to do better.

CM: Thank you very much, David. I know that there is much more you could share with us.

#### References

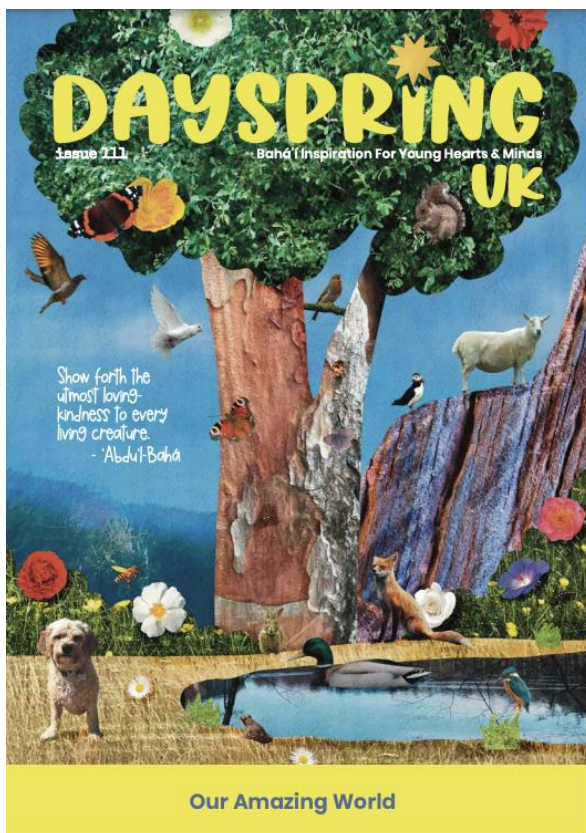
[Tiny shrimp leave giant carbon footprint](#) (Phys.org)

[Environmental degradation from shrimp farming](#) (Mongabay.com)

**Source:** Wilmette Institute Website: <https://wilmetteinstitute.org/the-many-problems-with-shrimp/>

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## Our Amazing World



We thank IEF Board Member Wendi Momen for sending us this beautiful resource for children.

**Our Amazing World** is the title of the recent issue of *Dayspring*, the official Baha'i Children's Magazine of the UK. It is a great resource for children 5 -12 to learn about and appreciate nature.

Here is the [direct link to this issue](#).

This is the link to all issues of the children's magazine:

<https://www.dayspring.bahai.uk/>

## Young Africans: Agents of change in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

With thanks to IEF Board member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen for sharing

We are thrilled to share with you our latest publication, entitled Transformative actions #46 – Young Africans: Agents of change in implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, co-produced with Global Youth Biodiversity Framework Africa (GYBN Africa) and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). The document draws on the achievements of the **2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the African Youth Biodiversity Summit (AYSB)** held in Rabat in September 2023, presents its outcomes and summarises the next steps on the agenda of African youth, enthusiastic and determined to make tangible progress towards nature positive action.

You can download the document here:

<https://4post2020bd.net/resources/transformative-actions-46-young-africans-agents-of-change-in-implementing-the-kunming-montreal-global-biodiversity-framework/>

or go directly here:

[https://4post2020bd.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/V19\\_280124\\_F-COMMITMENTS-ON-46.pdf](https://4post2020bd.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/V19_280124_F-COMMITMENTS-ON-46.pdf)

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### Items of Interest

#### **Ahead of INC-4, UNEP Publishes Revised Draft Text of Plastic Treaty**

The mission of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) is to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment (Plastic Pollution INC-4). It will take place in April 2024 in Canada.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has just published the revised draft text of the international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

Go here to read a brief summary about the draft text of the Plastics Treaty and to download it: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/ahead-of-inc-4-unep-publishes-revised-draft-text-of-plastic-treaty/>

#### **Circularity Gap Report Shows How to Shift to, Grow, and Build Circular Economy**

To accelerate progress towards a circular economy, the report calls for addressing the root causes of linear impacts.

It recommends changing the “rules of the game” in favor of circular practices and proposes a strategy to unlock capital, roll out policies that are bold but contextually appropriate, and close the sustainable and circular skills gap.

Go here to read about and to download the report: <https://sdg.iisd.org/news/circularity-gap-report-shows-how-to-shift-to-grow-and-build-circular-economy/>