



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.

IEF Webinars

By IEF Webinar Coordinator Khela Baskett

26th IEF Webinar

Workshop: How to Talk about Climate Change

6 April 2024

10am PDT British Columbia

1pm EDT Ottawa

6pm GMT London

7pm CEST Central Europe

7pm CAT Lilongwe, Malawi

8pm EAT Kampala, Uganda

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



Image: Dr. Katharine Hayhoe

Description

For this month's webinar, we're going to have an interactive session. We'll use a TedTalk by Katharine Hayhoe (climate scientist and activist) as a springboard for discussion and exercises on the topic "How to talk about climate change".

Khela Baskett, your IEF Webinar host, will lead this workshop webinar. Khela studied chemistry and computer science at UC Berkeley. She has worked in biotech at the Joint Genome Institute and held software engineering and project management roles for academic, government, and industry projects. Most recently, she and her husband have started a company offering environmental retrofits for residential properties in the Colorado Rockies. Khela loves studying behavioral economics and human behavior, and its applications for climate action.

This is one of a monthly series of webinars hosted by the International Environment Forum: <https://iefworld.org/lectures>.

27th IEF Webinar

The following webinar will take place on **4 May**, at the same time. IEF member Gary Reusche will speak about **Our Environment and the Next 20 Years**.

Registration: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF-Reusche>

IEF Youth Gathering

The IEF Youth Team warmly invites all youth to its second informal gathering. It is wonderful that the youth team provides a space where young people can freely share their concerns, hopes, and ideas:

In a world full of tragedies and challenges we continue our topic on hope by considering the dual forces of integration and disintegration and together share hopeful stories from our own communities. Very welcome to join the IEF youth gathering!

Here is the Zoom link:

<https://stockholmuniversity.zoom.us/j/3650691864>

24 March 10, 2024

11am PDT British Columbia / California

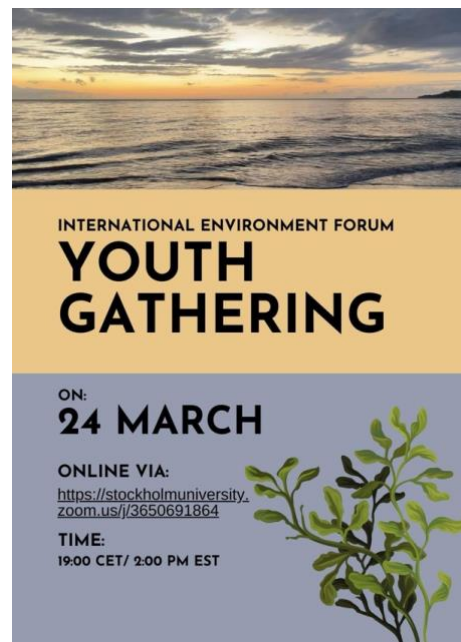
2pm EDT Ottawa / New York

6pm GMT London

7pm CET Central Europe

7pm CAT Lilongwe, Malawi

8pm EAT Kampala, Uganda



NSA Shares Information on Faith Climate Action Week and Environmental Sustainability Resources

The National Spiritual Assembly of the USA sent a letter to the Baha'i community reminding the friends of this year's Faith Climate Action Week, which will run from April 19-28. The letter cites some opportunities that are available to participate in activities that promote environmental sustainability and includes links to educational resources. The National Assembly's letter is accessible through the following link and reproduced below:

[National Spiritual Assembly on 2024 Faith Climate Action Week \(PDF\)](#)

March 5, 2024

To the American Bahá'í community

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

As the seasons change and we joyously advance towards spring and the period of reflection and renewal that encompasses the Bahá'í festivals of Naw-Rúz and Ridván, it is timely to pause and contemplate our relationship with our natural environment. The recently published [Fifth National Climate Assessment](#) reports that the United States experienced at least 25 weather and climate disasters in 2023, ranging from hurricanes and forest fires to drought and flooding. By comparison, from 1980–2022, this number averaged less than nine incidents annually. Further, average global temperatures in each of the last 12 months have reached unprecedented levels. While sobering, such growing challenges represent a remarkable opportunity to bring the light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh to bear on these pressing issues.

Technical solutions such as low-emissions transportation, renewable energy, and sustainable agriculture will undoubtedly be essential in transitioning to a more equitable and environmentally friendly economy; however, these are elements best worked out by the scientific and policy experts. To truly address the climate crisis, all of us must become ever more mindful of the moral, ethical, social, and environmental implications of our behaviors and reflect on how spiritual principles can help us overcome the self-interests that have allowed the crisis to deepen.

For those who wish to learn more about the national discourse on climate change, we are pleased to share a few upcoming opportunities. The Bahá'í-inspired International Environment Forum has developed an [elearning center](#) that features a range of useful resources, including materials for children's classes and devotional gatherings. The Blessed Tomorrow initiative of ecoAmerica offers an interfaith [Climate Ambassadors training program](#), and Interfaith Power and Light will again host a [Faith Climate Action Week](#), April 19–28, 2024. We know that many friends care deeply about these issues and hope that these spaces for advancing learning will inspire many to robustly engage in the evolving discourse on environmental matters. Be assured of our appreciation for your efforts and of our loving best wishes.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Kenneth E. Bowers

Secretary

National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States



New Resources on the IEF Website

New compilation on the Economy

The IEF has added to its compilations of texts from Bahá'í sources a new document [The Economy: A Bahá'í Perspective](#). It covers the following thematic areas: Challenging Assumptions of the old World Order - Principles for a new economic order - Justice - Moderation - Service - Towards a Bahá'í Economics - Poverty - Wealth - Distribution of Wealth - Capital and Labour - Work and Employment - Sustainability - Transformation-A New World Order. It includes 101 different texts.

At a time when the dominant materialistic world economy is increasingly threatened by its own internal contradictions including extremes of wealth and poverty, increasing debt, climate change, destruction of its natural resource base, the collapse of biodiversity, pollution and waste far beyond planetary boundaries, we hope that this compilation will contribute to meaningful conversations and public discourse on positive ways forward based on moral and ethical principles.

It can be found with many other compilations on the [Resources](#) section of the IEF website. You can also go there directly [here](#).

Scientific and Spiritual Dimensions of Climate Change, an Interfaith Study Course

The sixth update of the interfaith study course *Scientific and Spiritual Dimensions of Climate Change* included a major revision. This process is now completed, and the materials are now accessible on the IEF website here: <https://iefworld.org/ssdcc0.html>

The aim of this course is to serve as a contribution to the efforts to empower individuals, groups, and institutions to address the environmental challenges in their communities and to engage in meaningful conversations for positive social change.

The topic of climate change is huge, and most people are overwhelmed by too much information, some of which may not even be accurate. The course aims to provide the necessary knowledge that every citizen of the world needs to build a society in harmony with nature. Clearly though, knowledge alone is not sufficient. Spiritual and ethical principles are needed for guidance and motivation, and to provide a vision for a just, peaceful, and environmentally sustainable world. A spiritual perspective and empowerment for action can also help with the despair that can be caused by the realization of the seriousness of the state of our world.

Groups can adapt the materials to their special interests and circumstances. Individuals can use the materials for personal study and as a resource for their service.

Any faith group can use these materials. Baha'is may find them especially helpful as a resource for meaningful conversations and public discourse, for devotional gatherings and firesides, and for social action.



The Zero Draft to Create a Pact for the Future Has Landed The Hard Part Begins

Opinion by Florence Syevuo and Dan Perell
Co-chairs of the [Coalition for the UN We Need](#)

The [zero draft](#) of the Pact for the Future — the agreement to seal September’s much-anticipated Summit of the Future — was introduced recently by the co-facilitators, Namibia and Germany, to fellow members at the United Nations. The draft is the fruition of careful consideration, balancing an array of diverse aspirations from all 193 member states.

It is built on the proposals made in Secretary-General António Guterres’s Our Common Agenda and related 11 policy briefs, as well as the report of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism. The draft reinforces numerous points of agreement reached during and before last September’s SDG Summit. To their credit, the Namibian and German negotiators encouraged other parties from beyond governments to respond, attracting more than 500 contributions worldwide.

Why is the draft so important? It plants the seed toward instituting much-needed progress in how the world is governed. Some say this is not the time for global governance reform, that the world is far too divided. On the contrary, it is vital that we take responsibility to counter the forces of disintegration — and the UN must lead in this regard. It is imperative that the UN is empowered to move this agenda ahead.

Germany and Namibia must be aspirational yet practical, forward thinking but attuned to present realities, ambitious but politically feasible. The way to strike such a sensitive balance is for the member states to understand the current challenges, to learn from the past 79 years of the UN’s life span and to project those lessons out a century from now. What steps will be taken at the September summit to set us on that positive path?

The draft can be a constructive point of departure to reach more ambitious levels of agreement. We are pleased to see robust recommendations regarding meaningful youth engagement in its dedicated chapter as well as the treatment of emerging technology — including lethal autonomous weapons — in the peace chapter. But this is just a start.

The [Coalition for the UN We Need](#), which last year produced an interim people’s pact before the five chapters of the Pact for the Future were finalized, supports the principles articulated in the draft. It is also consistent with the Coalition’s open letter on the UN Summit of the Future, signed by more than 50 eminent people worldwide who called on governments to “scale up their commitments and collaboration, taking a long-term perspective to bring about a world that is more equitable, inclusive, secure and sustainable.”

As promised, the draft commits member states to the principles of human rights and gender equality. Vitally, the pact suggests that member states “commit to concrete steps to reinvigorate this system, fill critical gaps in global governance, and accelerate efforts to keep our past promises and agreements.” This focus will represent the work of the next seven months.

For people who have followed the preparations for the Summit, there are not many new substantive initiatives in the draft. Most of the text reflects internationally agreed language, without committing to specific governance reforms. Repeated phrases, such as “We commit

to further developing . . .” and “We will work together to improve . . .” indicate a direction for improving international cooperation, but with the all-important details to be worked out in negotiations before the Summit or during the proposed two-year implementation period (with a stocktaking of progress on reform commitments to be held at the end of the General Assembly’s 80th session, in 2026).

One interesting note from the co-facilitators in the draft section on “Transforming Global Governance” indicates an intention to provide initial language for proposed Security Council reform by June 2024.

Fully aware of current political sensitivities, it is now time for civil society to engage member states as constructive partners more formally. Such active participation can catalyze the level of agreement and ambition among governments.

The next steps we propose:

- Generate excitement, political will and public support for cooperative and creative global solutions. Because of the daunting polycrisis we face, this can ensure a valuable outcome.
- Work with a wide range of experts to flesh out additional innovations, consistent with the “new approach” underscored in the draft. These could range from such low-hanging fruit as gender alternation of the president of the General Assembly to more aspirational calls, like enhancing the UN Environment Program and annual climate COPs or upgrading the Peacebuilding Commission into an empowered Peacebuilding Council.
- Build greater trust in the negotiations by allowing civil society access to the proceedings. This will help all diplomats as they forge a common ground, while providing citizens a window into an intergovernmental process.
- As the draft expresses, set in motion efforts “to review progress on the implementation of the commitments in this Pact.” This could go further, in line with a core recommendation of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism to include a call for an a UN Charter review conference.

The draft represents a promising start upon which to build a successful Summit of the Future.

SOURCE: Pass Blue: <https://www.passblue.com/2024/02/07/the-zero-draft-to-create-a-pact-for...>

Reefs of Hope endorsed by UNESCO

Corals for Conservation Fiji Islands

IEF member Austin Bowden-Kerby in Fiji and his organisation Corals for Conservation have developed a programme Reefs of Hope to respond to the threats to coral reefs from climate change and global heating. They identify the most heat-resistant corals and move them to where they may have the best chance of surviving the hot water. Ocean temperatures have been far above even the worst predictions the last two years.

Reefs of Hope has now been officially endorsed by UNESCO as part of its Ocean Decade of Action, providing the highest level of international recognition: <https://oceandecade.org/>. It is the most significant advance yet in Austin's efforts to upscale the work to save coral reefs regionally across the tropical Pacific Islands. The endorsement does not come with direct

funding, but it can help in building a well-funded regional coral-focused program to save coral reefs in every nation of the tropical Pacific Ocean and beyond.

The program puts the sectors most impacted by coral reef collapse in the forefront of saving these reefs, in a systematic, controlled and orderly fashion, but accelerated based on the urgency to move quickly. It includes intensive capacity building, jobs creation, and support for community based marine protected areas (MPAs), alternative community livelihoods, and meaningful tourism industry involvement.

Austin is continuing to develop the scientific components of the model, and to challenge its assumptions with more data, to provide more proof of concept and to refine the models as required, before it is widely upscaled at community, resort, NGO, and government levels. Restoration scientists are becoming keenly interested and are wanting to become involved in this work, which should help to fill the many gaps in knowledge. He also continues to develop the community and tourism components of the model, and the educational components as well.

A challenge now is to launch this regionally with a massive awareness campaign on Reefs of Hope solutions and their implementation.

Corals for Conservation now has an internationally recognized, holistic, community supportive, and nature-based model, up and running to save coral reefs from the wall of fire that is coming at them. While the leading edge of coral reef collapse is strewn with the bones of dead corals and local coral extinctions, a massive mobilization is coming with strategies to avoid so much loss, and to get the corals back and in good breeding condition. There are now the tools and strategic plans to fight back.

Austin admits it is not going to be easy, but now he can offer a more productive alternative than cleaning the house before it burns, or simply watching on in horror. The Reefs of Hope strategy is ready for integration into coral reef conservation and restoration efforts all over the planet.

See Austin's video from 2022 on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnJ-eUVJwqE>.

It shows his indigenous Fiji team at work in the Malolo sites, and explains the great need for unified action to save coral reefs. To learn more about how you can help and get involved, go to: <https://corals4conservation.org/>



Call for an Earth System Council

By IEF President Arthur Lyon Dahl

A concept that has recently emerged in my consultations on global environmental governance is the need to define within the United Nations (UN) system a responsibility for the protection, management and governance of the global Earth System. This would go beyond the current recognition of the environment, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution as some problems to be addressed, often with separate processes and institutions. We must accept that the Earth System is a complex, dynamic and integrated global system that first created and now maintains the conditions necessary for life on this planet, in what could be called the common good of all living things including us. We are a single human family sharing one common home, the planet Earth. We must accept responsibility in solidarity for its maintenance today and as trustees for passing it on to future generations in the best possible condition.

The word environment does not appear in the UN Charter of 1945. One of the most significant changes since its adoption has been the emergence of the environment as a global problem, with both a growing scientific understanding of the Earth System with the biosphere and its ecosystem services that make life possible, and the rapid growth in the human population and its technological civilization which have eroded the Earth's resources and capacity, pushing far beyond safe and sustainable planetary boundaries. The many multilateral environmental agreements to address these problems within the present paradigm of national sovereignty and voluntary global governance have failed to prevent environmental threats from becoming existential challenges and catastrophes already happening.

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 biblical scale.¹ All these problems are interrelated in a single Earth System. Urgent action is needed to address such loss and damage. 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, governance should extend to all contributors to environmental degradation. 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.

Continue reading this article here: <https://iefworld.org/ddahl24a>

Climate change requires global citizenship education

By IEF Member Rafael Amaral Shayani,
Professor of “Engineering and Climate Change”,
University of Brasilia, Brazil

Humanity needs a different approach to combat climate change. Even with annual meetings of world leaders (COPs) and continuous pledges to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the actions taken by nations are still insufficient. A clear indication that something different needs to be done is the fact that 2023 was the hottest year on record with 1.48°C above pre-industrial levels.

This tremendous challenge that humanity faces requires a new strategy to avoid the increase of extreme climatic events that cause so much material damage to the affected people, not to mention deaths caused by excessive rain or extreme drought.

Awareness of climate change through education is the solution! In 2021, UNESCO emphasized the importance of a reset in education with the intention of empowering students to shape a peaceful, just, and sustainable future (UNESCO’s Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education, 2021).

In 2023, a new educational guideline was presented to the world. UNESCO emphasized that education should enable students to develop: analytical and critical thinking, anticipatory skills, a sense of connectedness and belonging to a common and diverse humanity and planet Earth, collaborative skills, and citizenship skills, among others (The UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, 2023).

This is the pathway to combat climate change! For example, critical thinking enables avoidance of past mistakes by seeking solutions that are no longer based on fossil fuels. The ability to anticipate threats allows visualization of the cost of natural disasters caused by climate change which is much higher than the investment needed for climate mitigation and adaptation. This will then direct the endless debate on sustainable development financing. Also, a sense of interconnectedness allows students to become connected with nature. In turn, this promotes the realization that with only one planet and one habitation, all ecosystems are interconnected and must be preserved. Finally, collaborative skills increase cooperation among countries in search of common solutions for the whole planet.

All these aspects are guided by the awareness of global citizenship which recognizes the oneness of humanity, wherein everyone is equally valued, no one is left behind, and everyone has the right to a healthy climate. With these attributes, countries will genuinely unite in heart in search of climate solutions instead of gathering around a table and professing extremely divergent matters of concern regarding a common future for humanity.

When global citizenship gets emphasized, the concern will no longer be how a person, a nation, or a corporation is judged successful, but rather how the world is judged successful. A prioritization of possessions will give way to a prioritization of relationships. The materialistic vision that sees individuals only as a purely self-interested economic unit competing with others to accumulate an ever-greater share of the world’s material resources, will end, and the principle of moderation will find much fuller expression in global arrangements (One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá’í Perspective on Recasting Humanity’s Relationship With the Natural World, 2022).

Quoting Bahá’u’lláh (1817-1892), "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens". This vision of global citizenship must be worked on, starting today, by all educators on the

planet. Thus, the new generations can effectively reduce GHG emissions--something the current generation has not been able to achieve.

Creating a New Food System that is Equitable and Ecological

Webinar by the Agriculture Group of the Association of Baha'i Studies

Sunday, March 31

10am PDT British Columbia

1pm EDT Ottawa

6pm GMT London

7pm CEST Central Europe

7pm CAT Lilongwe, Malawi

8pm EAT Kampala, Uganda

Ramzy Kassouf will share insights on creating a new food system that is equitable to farmers and ecological for the environment and the roles of individuals, communities and institutions.

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/>

Atlantic Ocean circulation nearing 'devastating' tipping point, study finds

By Jonathan Watts – The Guardian

12 February 2024

Collapse in system of currents that helps regulate global climate would be at such speed that adaptation would be impossible.

The circulation of the Atlantic Ocean is heading towards a tipping point that is “bad news for the climate system and humanity”, a study has found.

The scientists behind the research said they were shocked at the forecast speed of collapse once the point is reached, although they said it was not yet possible to predict how soon that would happen.

Using computer models and past data, the researchers developed an early warning indicator for the breakdown of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (Amoc), a vast system of ocean currents that is a key component in global climate regulation.

They found Amoc is already on track towards an abrupt shift, which has not happened for more than 10,000 years and would have dire implications for large parts of the world.

Go here to read the whole article: <https://iefworld.org/node/1519>