



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

John Warner, USA

Gina Oliver, USA

Mohamad Bayat, USA

Carlotta Garcia, USA

Harriet Fishman, USA

Catalina Martinez-Gomez, USA

Alberto Martins de Oliveira, USA

Kazushi Hatase, Japan

Associates

William Meessen, USA

*Image Credit: IEF Associate Edith Rose,
June 9, 2023*



IEF Youth Team



The Youth Team is excited to invite all youth to an **informal gathering on Sunday, 16 June.**

It will take place at
11am PDT California
2pm EDT New York
8pm CEST Central Europe










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

The youth will discuss how to share some of the topics raised in the statement *One Planet One Habitation* with their peers.

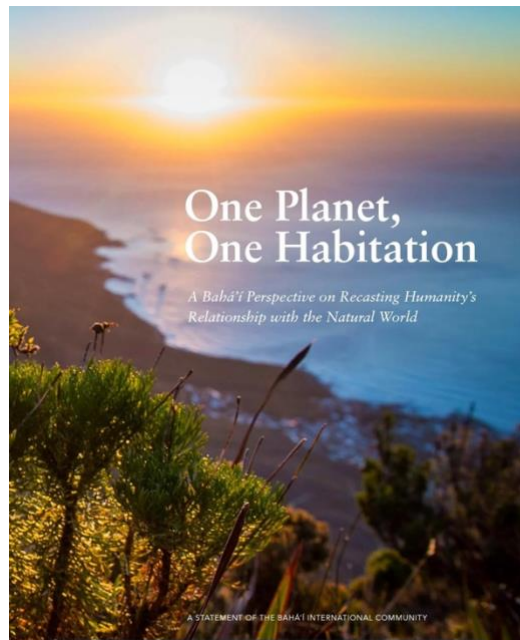
Please, invite all youth you know who may be interested in this gathering.

One Planet, One Habitation - A Baha'i Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World

This comprehensive statement has just been translated into Persian! Below are all the links to it in various languages:

-  [English](#)
-  [Romanian](#)
-  [French](#)
-  [Spanish](#)
-  [German](#)
-  [Arabic](#)
-  [Swedish](#)
-  [Italian](#)
-  [Persian](#)

Source: <https://www.bic.org/publications/one-planet-one-habitation>



Environmentally sustainable practices for Bahá'í properties

Guidance from the Bahá'í World Centre

Earlier this year, some IEF members wrote to the Universal House of Justice, the global governing institution of the Bahá'í Faith concerning the adoption of environmentally sustainable practices for Bahá'í properties around the world. The following is the main part of the reply from the Department of the Secretariat dated 14 March 2024.

"You may be interested to know that design teams working on new construction projects for Bahá'í properties in different countries are encouraged to take into account environmental sustainability measures that are appropriate in the context of the project concerned. Most commonly incorporated measures are the generation of on-site solar energy and the collection and reuse of rainwater. The design teams are also encouraged to bear in mind the long-term sustainability and maintenance of landscapes at Bahá'í properties and to consider using indigenous plants or vegetation that does not require excessive amounts of water or maintenance."

What's the most effective action we can take to help the environment?

by IEF Member Christine Muller

What's the most effective action we can take to help the environment? That was the sincere question of a student in the climate change course at the [Baha'i Institute for Higher Education](#) (BIHE) in Iran.

After exploring the [Climate Simulator](#) by [Climate Interactive](#), it became clear to all participants that no single technical solution would save us from climate change. We must reduce carbon emissions in all aspects of life and all economic activities: energy production, transportation, agriculture, etc. If we want to escape a climate catastrophe, these emission cuts must happen quickly and substantially to reach net zero by 2050! Humanity has never faced such a huge challenge.

So, what can we do as individuals and as small communities that would be most meaningful? This, of course, will depend on the reality of an individual's life and the needs and strengths of a community. Here are some thoughts:

For the required far-reaching climate actions to happen, we need a fundamental transformation that radically changes human perceptions of ourselves, the purpose of life, human relationships, and the relationship of humans with nature. Such actions will also require a clear vision and strong motivation to overcome the paralysis of will and the undeniably huge challenges. This can only happen with spiritual education and development. Spirituality, moderation, and contentment are prerequisites for humans to abandon the materialism and consumerism that are wrecking the planet. To overcome the mistaken views of human independence from nature and deep-rooted nationalism - the main obstacles to global climate action - we must plant the oneness of all humankind and our interconnectedness with the natural world deeply within our hearts and communities.

All Bahá'í activities, from devotional gatherings and study classes for all ages to 19-day feasts and firesides, are meant to advance us spiritually in this direction. Therefore, supporting Bahá'í community building and infusing public discourse about the environment with spiritual principles may be the most meaningful thing we all can do.

It may not be sufficient, though, because environmental awareness is low, especially in the US. Environmental education is essential to apply the Bahá'í teachings in these efforts properly. Environmental education can be incorporated into children's and junior youth classes. Adults can also learn about the environment, for example, by taking the upcoming Wilmette Institute's [Sustainable Development course](#) (starts July 24) or by exploring the vast resources on this website of the International Environment Forum, which includes [climate change materials for group or self-study](#).

Lastly, we can incorporate environmentally responsible actions in our daily lives and community activities in sync with the rhythm of life. Where conditions are ripe, we can also engage in [environmental social action](#).

Source: [Wilmette Institute June/July 2024 Newsletter](#), slightly adapted

The Cooperation Economy

Arthur Lyon Dahl
originally presented at the
ebbf-Ethical Business Building the Future
Annual Conference in Lisbon, 17 May 2024

“Putting the world on more ecologically sustainable foundations requires a recasting of the global economic order. People and the planet need to be valued as explicitly today as profit and economic gain have been in the past... Basic notions of progress, development, and prosperity will need to be recast in far more holistic terms.”ⁱ

It should be clear to any objective observer that the present world economy is largely dysfunctional, threatening the future of the planet, and not meeting the needs of the majority of humanity. But is there any reasonable alternative? How do we diagnose the illness and search for a remedy? Can there be a higher purpose for individuals than being passive consumers, and for the economy than creating wealth for the wealthy? What is, and could be, the role of business?

To elevate business and the economy, we must question their basic assumptions. Are we really inherently selfish, aggressive and competitive? What difference would it make if companies cooperated rather than competed? That is the theme of this essay.

Go here to read the full article: <https://iefworld.org/ddahl24g>

Here are just a few paragraphs taken from the essay to whet your appetite:

The fact that half the world population today still struggles to meet basic necessities despite all the wealth created by economic activity shows that something is fundamentally wrong. “The time has come when those who preach the dogmas of materialism, whether of the east or of the west, whether of capitalism or socialism, must give account of the moral stewardship they have presumed to exercise. Where is the “new world” promised by these ideologies?”ⁱⁱⁱ

It may help to review some of the examples of injustice in the present economic system. It is founded on greed, as expressed in the desire for endless profit, endless growth, endless wealth, and endless power. Everything deemed of value is monetised, and what cannot be monetised is ignored. For corporations, the primary institutional structure for business activities, the only legal obligation in their charter is profits for the shareholders, or what is called fiduciary responsibility. In the economic system, values are set by the market, or by monopolies, excluding the poor who cannot pay. Progress is measured by the flow of money through the system, or GDP, regardless of whether it contributes to human well-being.

With such corporate values, it seems normal for corporations to ignore their impacts on the global system or human health. With a narrowly defined material purpose to increase wealth and power, pursued through short-term profit, the end often justifies any means. Whole industries contribute to the economy through the manufacture of arms and weapons, profiting from war and preparations for war and destruction. Others are devoted to producing products that increase sales by using addictive drugs or chemicals, such as caffeine, nicotine, narcotics, and alcohol, with serious impacts on human health. Other examples are industries profiting from violence and sex entertainment, or gambling. Today we see the emergence of addictive technologies, carefully designed to trap consumers and extract wealth. All of this is supported by intensive advertising and consumer marketing.

A consequence of such a definition of purpose is what could be considered moral failures in business. It is common to use transfer pricing, “creative” accounting, and offshore tax havens to escape from taxation, which normally supports the public good. Organized crime and corruption are widespread. Corporate leaders and bankers feel entitled to exorbitant salaries and bonuses. There is frequent corporate funding of disinformation, as with the fossil fuel companies consistent denial of climate change. Powerful lobbies influence “democratic” processes through their wealth and access to political leaders. “Injustice is tolerated with indifference and disproportionate gain is regarded as the emblem of success.”^{iv}

As the Bahá’í International Community has put it: “...economic growth over recent decades has indisputably brought about prosperity for many, but with that growth unmoored from justice and equity, a few have disproportionately benefited from its fruits and many are in precarious conditions. Those living in poverty are at the greatest risk from any contraction of the world economy, which exacerbates existing inequalities and intensifies suffering.”^v

References:

i Bahá’í International Community. One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá’í Perspective on Recasting Humanity’s Relationship with the Natural World, 1 June 2022, Rethinking Economic Arrangements

iii Universal House of Justice, The Promise of World Peace, 1985, I, p. 7

iv Universal House of Justice, Ridvan 2012

v Bahá’í International Community, A Governance Befitting, 21 September 2020

Fossil carbon value added tax

proposal by IEF President Arthur Lyon Dahl

One way to accelerate the transition away from fossil carbon fuels with their greenhouse gas emissions would be to create a global mechanism to regulate, tax and if necessary fine the extraction, processing, distribution and sale of fossil fuels by entities and corporations, whether public or private, based on science and equity, to protect the global commons. This could, for example, be assigned to an upgraded UNEP as a Global Environment Agency with its UN Environment Assembly, or given to the OECD. The UN Framework Convention on

Climate Change is limited by its consensus rule, which would certainly block such a proposition.

In applying the polluter-pays principle, the logical and most direct approach would be to establish a global fossil carbon value added tax (CVAT). This would be a fixed percentage of the value added, or profit created, by each step in the geological extraction, processing, trade/transport, and sale of all forms of fossil carbon and derivatives therefrom. It would be imposed on the institutions, entities and corporations, public or private, directly involved and responsible for benefiting from the process or transaction, including the owners of mines, wells and other fossil fuel extraction, the processors of intermediate and final products, the traders and transporters of the products, and the wholesalers and final sellers of the products to consumers. It would apply to fossil carbon used as fuel, and for other products such as plastics, agricultural chemicals and other petrochemicals. Each step in the process generates profits which can be subject to a value-added tax, much as is done in funding the European Union.

Creating a common global CVAT would maintain a level playing field with respect to competitive advantages and national priorities, unlike a carbon border tax.

This would both raise the cost of products from fossil carbon to incentivise their replacement, and generate significant funds to be devoted to mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage from climate change, and investment in renewable alternatives. It could also address transitional issues of justice, such as finding alternatives for workers and communities impacted by closing down the fossil fuel industry, and the poor who might be hit by a temporary rise in the cost of energy. The receipts could be used both nationally and internationally with mutually-beneficial sharing of the proceeds of the tax, including covering the cost of collecting the tax.

A Moment of Truth

On World Environment Day, 5 June 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres presented a special address on climate action, "A Moment of Truth", to the American Museum of Natural History, in New York:

Today is World Environment Day. It is also the day that the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Change Service officially reports May 2024 as the hottest May in recorded history.

This marks 12 straight months of the hottest months ever. For the past year, every turn of the calendar has turned up the heat. Our planet is trying to tell us something. But we don't seem to be listening.

The American Museum of Natural History is the ideal place to make the point. This great Museum tells the amazing story of our natural world. Of the vast forces that have shaped life on Earth over billions of years. Humanity is just one small blip on the radar. But like the meteor that wiped out the dinosaurs, we're having an outsized impact. In the case of climate, we are not the dinosaurs. We are the meteor. We are not only in danger. We are the danger. But we are also the solution.

We are at a moment of truth. The truth is almost 10 years since the Paris Agreement was adopted, the target of limiting long-term global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius is hanging by

a thread. The truth is the world is spewing emissions so fast that by 2030, a far higher temperature rise would be all but guaranteed.

Brand new data from leading climate scientists released today show the remaining carbon budget to limit long-term warming to 1.5 degrees is now around 200 billion tons. That is the maximum amount of carbon dioxide that the Earth's atmosphere can take if we are to have a fighting chance of staying within the limit.

The truth is we are burning through the budget at reckless speed — spewing out around 40 billion tons of carbon dioxide a year. We can all do the math. At this rate, the entire carbon budget will be busted before 2030. The truth is global emissions need to fall 9 per cent every year until 2030 to keep the 1.5-degree limit alive. But they are heading in the wrong direction. Last year they rose by 1 per cent.

The truth is we already face incursions into 1.5-degree territory. The World Meteorological Organization reports today that there is an 80 per cent chance the global annual average temperature will exceed the 1.5-degree limit in at least one of the next five years. In 2015, the chance of such a breach was near zero. And there's a 50-50 chance that the average temperature for the entire next five-year period will be 1.5 degrees higher than pre-industrial times.

We are playing Russian roulette with our planet. We need an exit ramp off the highway to climate hell. And the truth is we have control of the wheel. The 1.5-degree limit is still just about possible. Let's remember — it's a limit for the long-term — measured over decades, not months or years. So, stepping over the threshold 1.5 for a short time does not mean the long-term goal is shot. It means we need to fight harder. Now.

The truth is the battle for 1.5 degrees will be won or lost in the 2020s — under the watch of leaders today. All depends on the decisions those leaders take — or fail to take — especially in the next 18 months.

Keep reading UN Secretary-General António Guterres' speech here:
https://iefworld.org/SG_cc2024

SOURCE: <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sqsm22255.doc.htm>

Climate Scientists View the Future

Based on Damian Carrington
The Guardian Weekly
17 May 2024

In a 2024 survey of 843 scientists leading the IPCC since 2018, with 380 responding, 77% believe the global temperature increase will reach 2.5°C, 42% expect more than 3°C, and only 6% think 1.5°C will be achieved. Most say the target is dead.

We already see profound climate damage at 1.2°C, and every additional +0.1° means 140 million more suffering dangerous heat. Over 2.5°C means food price spikes, broken supply

chains, mass migration. At 2.7°C, 2 billion people will be outside the habitable zone. At 3.0°C, cities including Shanghai, Rio de Janeiro, Miami, The Hague will be below sea level.

The scientists see a future that will be harrowing, with famines, mass migration and conflict. They feel fear, frustration, distress, and are overwhelmed. Their good science did not make a difference to policy. They see humanity is heading for destruction, with the climate emergency already here. This is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced. Societies will be forced to change from severe suffering and damage.

Why? For 75%, it is a lack of political will, 60% blame vested corporate interests, and only 27% see a lack of money. The fault is also short-term thinking by governments and businesses. They see the capture of politicians and media by fossil fuel companies and petrostates. Another root cause is the gap between rich and poor, with growing inequality. Rich countries have taken all the carbon budget.

On the positive side, they see hope from green technologies, and moving to more inclusive and equitable ways of living. It is getting cheaper to save the climate. Social tipping points could also trigger large-scale climate action. There is hope in the younger generations that are fighting climate change. The worst-case scenario is still avoidable.

SOURCE: based on Damian Carrington, *The Guardian Weekly* 17 May 2024, pp. 34-39.

The Need for Creative Urban Farming Designs

Webinar by the Agriculture Group of the Association of Baha'i Studies
with C.J. Pratt
Sunday, June 30 at 1:00pm EDT

In this session we will learn about the need for creative urban farming designs: micro-managed small acreage farming, inner-city permaculture establishment, CSA (community supported agriculture), farmer's markets, among other models.

CJ Pratt owns and operates the agriculture and landscape company DoVine (because doing work is Divine) based in Lansing, Michigan. He is a graduate of MSU's organic farmer program and has acquired properties through the Ingham County Land Bank as a means to rejuvenate an impoverished community. Through his company, he has been called upon to provide landscaping and agricultural services at Louhelen Baha'i School. In addition, he is a published allegorical poet and an accomplished artist of community murals in Lansing. His true passion is building unity within our communities.

"We are honored and feel a great connection to the arts and agriculture as twin creative solutions to many of the issues that exist in the US. The practice of agriculture and the arts, coupled with the principles of the Baha'i Faith, have a great chance to overturn much of the suffering we witness each and every day."

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/>

Environmental Justice Movement: Contribution of European Forum for Restorative Justice

By IEF Associate Dr. Santosh Kumar Mishra

The author of this argues that the term “environmental justice” includes not only many different perspectives, but also (a) “the movement to criminalise ecosystem destruction”, and (b) “initiatives to acknowledge the rights of nature and the duty of care for the environment”. “Restorative justice”, on the other hand, is an approach of addressing environmental harm, including common understanding and agreement on how the harm can be repaired and justice achieved. The environmental Justice Movement (EJM), thus, is an alternative justice paradigm that prioritises to address the harm done. The initiatives undertaken by the European Forum for Restorative Justice (EFRJ: with its headquarters in Leuven, Belgium) in EJM is innovative, as its work at the policy level aims to develop and improve the restorative justice legal frame in Europe and beyond. The general aim of the EFRJ is to contribute to the development of “high-quality restorative justice” throughout Europe. This review paper provides an insight into the (significant) contributions made by the EFRJ in in the area of environmental justice movement.

In terms of approaches adopted, it has been observed that the EFRJ, and its membership, is very active with regards to policy making in Europe at the level of (a) the Council of Europe (CoE), (b) the European Union (EU), and (c) the United Nations (UN). Besides, in 2018, it launched the [European Restorative Justice Policy Network](#) (ERJPN:) for creating a closer link with policy makers. The EFRJ, through this initiative, strives to achieve a larger impact on national efforts on developing restorative justice in countries in the EU region. Further, it promotes research, policy and practical development so that every person may have access to high quality restorative justice services at any time and in any case. Furthermore, its main focus is on the application of restorative justice to criminal matters. However, it is pertinent to note that the EJM should be based on core restorative values (and principles). Also, it should adhere to standards of good practice.

The paper briefly concludes that the EFRJ has striven to bring together researchers, practitioners and policy makers interested in restorative justice, with the aim of helping to establish and develop victim-offender mediation and other restorative justice practices.

Protecting the oceans from greenhouse gases

International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
21 May 2024

The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) has ruled on 21 May 2024 that countries need to go beyond their commitments under the Paris Agreement to protect the oceans from the impact of greenhouse gas emissions. In a case brought by a coalition of nine small island nations, the court found that greenhouse gas emissions absorbed by oceans can be considered pollutants and states must do whatever they can to reduce them. This Advisory Opinion can influence climate negotiations and serve as a precedent in future court cases.

The Hamburg-based tribunal was asked to clarify the state responsibilities on climate change under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which has 164 parties (except the United States). The treaty aims to prevent, reduce and control marine pollution, but it was not clear if greenhouse gas emissions qualified as pollutants.

Most countries acknowledged that greenhouse gas emissions pollute the oceans, but they disagreed on what obligations the maritime treaty imposed on their actions related to climate change. The polluters pushed back, with China and India claiming that issues relating to climate change should be handled within the UN climate change (UNFCCC) regime, and wealthy nations including the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan and Australia saying the Paris Agreement procedures comply with the requirements of UNCLOS, arguing against more stringent obligations. But the tribunal said “complying with the obligations and commitments under the Paris Agreement” would not be enough to satisfy a country’s duty to protect the oceans, since it let countries set their own climate goals. Obligations under the Paris Agreement set a floor, not a ceiling, for state action on greenhouse gas emissions.

The oceans absorb about 25% of all carbon dioxide emissions and capture 90% of excess global heating. Ocean surface temperature have broken records since March 2023. The resulting rise in sea level will drown atoll small island states by the end of the century. The major polluters should be held accountable.

Payam Akhavan, the legal counsel for the nine island nations, said the case came out of “frustration with the failure of the COP process” to achieve its objectives. “The turn to international law should simply shape future negotiations to ensure that the climate change regime is more robust and that it has more teeth than it presently does”, he added.

The tribunal’s opinion could influence coming climate negotiations and push countries most responsible for the climate crisis to raise their ambition to cut emissions in their next national climate plans due in early 2025. The decision could also form a significant precedent and influence upcoming legal opinions by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights and the International Court of Justice, which are also considering countries’ climate obligations.

SOURCE: based on

<https://www.climatechangenews.com/2024/05/21/un-court-countries-must-go...>

Items of Interest

Key Requirements for a Science-based International Legally Binding Instrument to End Plastic Pollution

[In preparation for INC-4](#), the [ISC expert group on plastic pollution](#) has prepared a High-level commentary in response to the Revised Draft and ongoing negotiations. The commentary underscores a set of science-based recommendations to inform ongoing negotiations, ensuring an effective and robust regulatory instrument and implementation.

Read More:

<https://council.science/publications/key-requirements-instrument-plastic-pollution/>