



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.

Words to Remember



Regrettably, the spirit of solidarity—which seemed to be on the rise at the turn of the century when the world’s leaders agreed on a set of global ambitions—is steadily eroding. Progress made over decades is in decline. And the scale and complexity of global challenges rapidly outpace the evolution of the systems designed to respond to them. These distressing trends are in fact symptoms of a deeper ailment facing societies: an inability on the part of the global community to fully embrace the reality that humanity is inextricably interdependent. There is every reason to believe that severe crises will continue to deepen until those responsible for governing world affairs, indeed the generality of humankind, embrace the profound implications of this truth.

Excerpt from *Embracing Interdependence: Foundations for a World in Transition*, a statement of the Bahá’í International Community on the occasion of the United Nations Summit of the Future, 4 September 2024

Image: North Kingstown, RI, 7 Nov. 2024

IEF Matters

Are you a website designer or a Librarian? The IEF needs you!

The website of the International Environment Forum contains a wealth of valuable resources. Most people don't realize that when visiting the page because its materials are so numerous that they are a bit hidden and sometimes tricky to find. How could the IEF website be better structured and displayed?

The IEF would appreciate the help of a website designer and the advice from a librarian (because the IEF website is comparable to a large library with many floors containing many rooms and shelves!) If you think you can support the IEF in this manner, please, send an email to the secretariat: ief@iefworld.org

Looking back at the IEF Conference

In case you have missed IEF's 28th Annual Conference, you can enjoy the recordings and reports of all the events here: <https://iefworld.org/conf28>.

UN Biodiversity COP16 in Colombia

Below you will find three reports on different aspects of the conference.

Interfaith Event during COP16 at House of Worship in Cali Report by Emmanuel Zapata Caldas and Pascal Molineaux

As part of [COP16](#), the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November, the [Bahá'í Community of Colombia](#), [Fundaeec](#), and the [Bahá'í International Community](#) organized an off-site event at the [Bahá'í House of Worship in Norte del Cauca](#).



About 30 people from various denominations (including Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Bahá'ís, and others) participated. The purpose was to share thoughts and reflections on the relationship between divinity and nature, and to present the House of Worship as a practical example of how this relationship is expressed: a space for individual and community prayer and meditation, as well as service, linked to a "native forest" project on 11.5 hectares of

former sugarcane monoculture that has now been converted to a dry tropical forest—the predominant ecosystem in this area of southwestern Colombia a century ago.

One participant noted that "After so many days of intense participation in COP16 activities, coming here has been a source of joy and spiritual and mental revitalization, which will support us in our efforts during these final days of the COP16." The whole day program included an interfaith worship service, a lunch with food typical of the region, and a tour of the native forest. Participants were pleased to see first-hand a practical example of the relationship between worship and nature, and were especially interested to learn that this effort was developed with active local community participation in collective workdays. Local residents understand that the House of Worship and the native forest are a collective asset that serves all of society. The event was also an important learning opportunity for the Bahá'í community of Colombia, as well as Fundaec, in the context of their participation in the discourses of society, in this case related to the conservation of the natural environment.

Strengthening Multilevel Accountability, side event at COP16 with IEF Board Member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen

One side event the first week of COP16 was on 'Strengthening Multilevel Accountability' organised in the Dutch pavilion by Wageningen University & Research. It approached the complex topic of accountability to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Kunming-Montreal Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework targets from very different disciplinary perspectives. This side event brought together social scientists and practitioners to share insights on how multilevel accountability mechanisms can drive positive outcomes for nature. The cyclical process of planning, monitoring, reporting, and reviewing within a responsibility and transparency framework is essential for successful implementation. A featured speaker was IEF board member Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen.





Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen speaking at the side event

COP16: Key outcomes from the UN biodiversity conference in Cali, Colombia

Carbon Brief published [in-depth summaries](#) of all the key outcomes from COP16. Here is the introduction:

The COP16 biodiversity summit came to an abrupt halt after countries failed to reach consensus on the creation of a new fund during a mammoth 10-hour final plenary session.

Countries debated through the night on Friday in Cali, Colombia, in an attempt to get through the many items on COP16's agenda.

But, as the talks dragged on into Saturday morning, a large number of developing-country delegates were forced to catch flights home, leaving parties without the “quorum” needed to reach consensus on key issues.

Countries did manage to find consensus on a new benefit-sharing mechanism for genetic resources – known as the “Cali fund” – after lengthy discussions and last-minute text changes put forward by India to protect sovereign rights.

Nations also agreed to a new permanent body for Indigenous peoples, which will allow them to advise and offer their view at biodiversity COPs directly for the first time.

However, the thorny issue of setting up a new fund under the COP – and the final agenda item on a new framework for monitoring countries' progress on tackling biodiversity loss – will need to be revisited at intersessional meetings next year.

Talks were overshadowed by a lack of progress on implementing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the landmark “Paris Agreement for nature” deal made at COP15 in Montreal in 2022.

A joint investigation by Carbon Brief and the Guardian revealed just before the summit opened that the vast majority of countries missed a deadline to set out new plans for how they will meet the targets of the framework ahead of COP16.

By the summit's end, just 44 out of 196 parties – 22% – had come up with new biodiversity plans.

Some megadiverse nations and major economies said they did not have the time needed to put plans in place, while developing countries said they were not provided with the funding required to produce new pledges.

You can click on any topic below that interests you to read Carbon Brief's in-depth summary and analysis of the key outcomes of COP16.

- [Formal negotiations](#)
 - [National biodiversity pledges \(NBSAPs\) and global review](#)
 - [NBSAPs](#)
 - [Global review](#)
 - [Finance](#)
 - [New fund and financial mechanism](#)
 - [\\$20bn tussle](#)
 - [Private and innovative financing](#)
 - [Digital sequence information](#)
 - [Monitoring framework](#)
 - [Article 8\(j\)](#)
 - [Biodiversity and climate change](#)
 - [Mainstreaming biodiversity](#)
 - [Synthetic biology](#)
 - [Biodiversity and health](#)
 - [Marine and coastal biodiversity](#)
 - [Links with other bodies](#)
 - [Invasive alien species](#)
 - [Capacity-building and knowledge management](#)
 - [Sustainable wildlife management](#)
- [Other matters](#)
 - [Liability and redress](#)
 - [Scientific and technical needs](#)
 - [IPBES](#)
 - [Plant conservation](#)
 - [Communication and education](#)
 - [Diverse values of biodiversity](#)
- [Around the COP](#)
 - [Colombian presidency](#)
 - [Accessibility and security](#)
 - [World leaders](#)
 - [Protests and environmental defenders](#)
 - [Greenwashing and lobbying](#)
 - [New science](#)

Source: [Carbon Brief](#)

Management of Invasive Plants in the Western USA - Why should we be concerned?

Webinar of the Association for Baha'i Studies Agriculture Group

Sunday, November 24 at
10:00am PST (Pacific Time)
1:00pm EST (Eastern Time)
7pm CET (Europe)

Speaker: Dr. Delena Norris-Tull

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/>

Description:

Why should we be concerned with the damage caused by invasive plant species?

- Displacement of native plant species in the natural landscape
- Habitat degradation is closely linked to the introduction of alien species.
- Some species are already facilitating an increase in Western wildfires.
- Invasive species significantly impact U.S. ecosystems and are one of the greatest threats to forest, rangeland, and urban forest health.
- Some invasive plant species have impacted wildlife and livestock, either directly, such as by poisoning, or indirectly, by altering habitats.
- Farmers that promote the growth of natural ecosystems near their agricultural lands increase the numbers of both introduced honey bees and native bees available to pollinate their crops.

Delena Norris-Tull is a Professor Emerita of Science Education, retired from the University of Montana Western. She is the author of several books, including [Edible and Useful Plants of the Southwest: Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona](#), and [Lone Star Field Guide: Wildflowers, Trees, & Shrubs of Texas](#).

In 2020 Dr. Delena Norris-Tull launched a website, Management of Invasive Plants in the Western USA, <https://www.invasiveplantwesternusa.org/>
The purpose of the website is to provide an extensive evaluation of the effectiveness of methods used to manage invasive plants.

Turning the Tide: Reducing Biodiversity Loss and Restoring Decimated Ecosystems

New essay by Anil Singh
The Bahá'í World, 14 October 2024

The Bahá'í World has announced the publication of a new essay, "Turning the Tide: Reducing Biodiversity Loss and Restoring Decimated Ecosystems," by author Anil Singh.

As environmental crises deepen, efforts to rethink humanity's relationship with nature and to pursue effective solutions are ever more urgent. The newly published essay highlights the devastating impact and severity of biodiversity loss and explores a number of relevant questions: How can our individual relationship with nature be rethought to create a more harmonious and sustainable world? How can collective will be mobilized to preserve and restore natural ecosystems? And, how can local, regional, and global governance become more coherent and integrated to address the interconnected challenges of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation?

To read the essay or listen to the audio recording:
<https://bahaiworld.bahai.org/library/turning-the-tide/>

Protecting Our Common Climate System: Earth Governance for a Sustainable Future

An interfaith appeal to the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29)

The International Environment Forum has endorsed [Protecting Our Common Climate System: Earth Governance for a Sustainable Future](#), an interfaith appeal to the 2024 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 29).

The Appeal was drafted by the World Federalist Movement – Institute for Global Policy **Transnational Working Group on values, faith-based perspectives and global governance** (Interfaith TWG), which includes IEF President Arthur Dahl. It will be presented to COP 29 at the Faith Pavilion on Monday 18 November 2024.

Protecting Our Common Climate System: Earth Governance for a Sustainable Future

Below is the full text of the joint Inter-faith and Values Appeal to the 2024 Conference of States Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 29)

As people of religious, faith-based and associated values who are committed to a stable climate and sustainable future, we appeal to the States Parties to the Climate Change Convention to take the opportunity of the 2024 Conference of States Parties (COP 29) in November to build **effective global governance to facilitate the high level of cooperative action required to protect the climate.**

With global temperature rise already causing wide-spread and devastating disasters, and with the tipping point for a global climate catastrophe imminent, it is evident that relying on national commitments in a competitive economic and political environment is not working.

Humanity must reach beyond nationalism to **build fit-for-purpose global governance for managing the Earth's atmosphere - our common climate system.** Such governance, if adopted, can ensure that existing climate commitments are fulfilled and are implemented collectively and effectively.

Principles and values that are shared across the world's major religions, faiths and philosophies provide inspiration and guidance for building such governance. These include the principles of protection of creation (the Earth's global ecosystem), reciprocity/equity, justice/fairness, social responsibility and Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship.

These principles and values point towards a number of environmental governance proposals that also have a strong basis in science, are feasible and enjoy public support. We appeal to States Parties at COP 29 to take note of these principles and to take action on the proposed governance mechanisms.

Protection of creation: The Earth's global ecosystem is under extreme threat. In addition to the atmosphere (climate change), we have already breached five of the other eight Planetary Boundaries. In order to bring us back from the brink of global ecosystem collapse, we need to develop and implement a cooperative global emergency action-plan now.

We encourage States Parties to the Climate Change Convention meeting at COP29 to support a UN Declaration of Planetary Emergency, the establishment of a Planetary Emergency Platform, connected with the development and implementation of a cooperative Planetary Emergency Action Plan.

Reciprocity/equity: Reciprocity is the principle that you treat others the way that you would want them to treat you – a “Golden Rule” found across faith, ethical and religious traditions. Likewise, equity extends this principle to future generations to hold that we should pass onto future generations a world that is no worse – and hopefully is better – than the world passed onto us by our ancestors. Two effective ways to ensure reciprocity and intergenerational equity would be to affirm the rights of future generations and establish Institutional Representatives of Future Generations to ensure implementation of these rights.

We encourage States Parties to:

- a) *Implement the Declaration on Future Generations adopted at the Summit of the Future;*
- b) *Give full support to the UN Special Envoy for Future Generations being established by UN Secretary-General; and*
- c) *Establish similar institutional representatives for future generations at local, national and regional levels, noting the excellent examples of such representative positions already established.*

Justice/fairness (and accountability): The principle of justice/fairness holds that use of Earth's resources needs to be managed in ways which are fair and just to all people and to the environment itself, and that we need mechanisms to ensure accountability for this. The principle provides the basis for fair management of resources including resolution of environmental conflicts and application of law that respects human rights and the rights of nature.

- a) *We encourage States Parties to recognize and fully implement the human right to a healthy environment, as well as the rights of nature.*
- b) *We call on States to utilize courts for the resolution of environment and resource conflicts and the implementation of environmental law, including national environment courts, regional courts and international courts and tribunals such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and to begin the development of an International Court for the Environment (ICE).*
- c) *We highlight the importance of the climate case currently before the ICJ, and call for full implementation of its upcoming decision.*
- d) *We welcome the initiative to add ecocide as a crime under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and*
- e) *We support proposals to include environmental crimes such as “environmental degradation” and the “exploitation of natural resources” in the potential crimes against humanity treaty currently before the UN Sixth Committee.*

Social responsibility: The principle of social responsibility holds that we have a duty to ensure provision of everyone's basic needs, and that the environment must be protected so that human needs are able to be met both now and into the future.

We encourage States to advance this principle with respect to the climate by negotiating, and implementing key principles of, a Fossil Fuel Treaty that would end subsidies for fossil fuels, phase out fossil fuel extraction, and increase investment in green economies, in particular in developing countries, to ensure that basic human needs are met in the transition to a fossil-fuel free future.

Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship: The principle of Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship holds that humanity does not own the Earth, even if some lands and territories are divided into private property. Rather we are guardians or trustees of the world for current and future generations. This role brings responsibility to better manage the various global environmental commons (e.g. the full Earth system, including the atmosphere, oceans, outer space and sea-bed) and common lands ('national commons') through effective Earth trusteeship models. This should be complemented by building effective environmental law which is universally applicable, including to private lands and territories, as well as to the commons.

- a) *We call on the United Nations to establish a cooperative trusteeship approach for better governance of the global commons, drawing inspiration for such governance from the UN Secretary-General's proposal to re-purpose the UN Trusteeship Council and proposals to create an Earth System Council as a fourth pillar of the UN.*
- b) *In addition, we highlight examples of Earth Trusteeship currently implemented at local, national and regional levels, such as national parks/reserves and the establishment of legal rights for natural entities. We call for a strengthening and expansion of such trusteeships.*

The Appeal was coordinated by the Transnational Working Group on Values, faith-based perspectives and global governance. It was open for endorsement by faith-based individuals and communities. Further information on the earth governance proposals made in this appeal is available at <https://www.earthgovernance.org> (see proposals and campaigns).

Transformation for Earth System Governance

**Arthur Lyon Dahl
2024**

Introduction

Our amazing and beautiful planet, that has seen the creation of life and ultimately the emergence of human beings, is now in danger from that very creation. We have short-circuited the laws of nature, and are rapidly devastating our Earthly home. Despite all our progress in philosophy, in science and technology, in culture and the arts, we seem bent on our own destruction. With the contributions of many great thinkers, the highest motivations of civil society organisations, and the amazing social experiments around the world, we know what to do, but there is generally what is termed a failure of political will, and therefore of governance. Underlying this is a structural problem, with many of the institutions of our society, both political and economic, created for short-term selfish benefits rather than the common good. The best efforts in the world are more than neutralized by forces in the other direction. This essay explores the roots of this dilemma from multiple perspectives, and proposes ways forward before it is too late.

A systems perspective

First, let us look at this ball of matter in space, Earth, from a systems perspective. The planet is covered by a thin layer of solids, liquids and gasses containing the biosphere, which is home to all life. Once primitive photosynthetic life emerged, it altered the environment to make it even more suitable for life, removing excess carbon from the atmosphere and adding oxygen to make animal life possible, while moderating the greenhouse effect. Life occurs in great diversity all around the planet, and is interconnected in many ways to form a single planetary ecosystem united by winds and currents, flows of energy and materials, interactions between multiple forms of life from bacteria to mammals, with many homeostatic mechanisms to keep all this in dynamic balance. There have been shocks and mass extinctions in the past, but each time the system has recovered and improved even further.

This Earth System is our amazing inheritance that we are still far from understanding completely. Evolution has produced millions of species of plants and animals, not to mention the thriving microbial life with an unbelievable diversity that genetic techniques and DNA analysis are only beginning to reveal, forming complex ecosystems with thousands of species living in close cooperation and reciprocity.

I chose as a young scientist to study one of the most complex ecosystems, the coral reef, to try to understand unity in diversity in nature (Dahl et al.1974). With a team of 80 specialists, we tried to develop a conceptual model of the coral reef ecosystem, how it functions to capture energy from the sun and transfer it within the system so efficiently, to recycle scarce materials in a resource-poor environment, to support thousands of species each with its own role in the system no matter how apparently insignificant, to be resilient in the face of inevitable shocks, and to construct its own environment more complex than a city, forming structures along thousands of kilometres of coastline at or near the ocean surface where conditions are right, built on layers of skeletons that can be more than a kilometre in thickness. There is no central control or direction, but close integration and flows of materials and information that enable an organic and dynamic unity among all the system components. Such examples in nature can serve as models for how we can create human systems able to form an ever-advancing civilisation. However today, with climate change raising ocean temperatures, and carbon dioxide dissolving in the water to make carbonic acid, coral reefs around the world are bleaching and dying. This marvel of nature may be the first major ecosystem to be driven to extinction by human impacts.

This is only one example of the heritage nature has bequeathed to us, in which so many species including us are capable of thriving at the level of the whole planet. Every part is more-or-less dependent on every other, and the whole is more than the sum of its parts. There are, for example, three global energy systems. Solar radiation heats the planet in a thermal system, maintaining temperatures suitable for life. Sunlight also powers the photosynthetic system of plants, where light energy is converted to the chemical energy upon which all life depends to function. Much less significant is geothermal energy from radioactive decay within the planet, which we see in volcanic eruptions and ocean bottom hydrothermal vents, and have domesticated in nuclear power plants. Similarly, there are chemical cycles of elements such as carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus and many others that function in part at the planetary level and have been kept in balance by physical and biological processes. Today we have invented many new substances for the benefit of our civilisation that are now so abundant that they have planetary impacts, such as plastics, antibiotics, pesticides, fertilisers, and many others that are increasingly impacting and unbalancing planetary systems in ways that we are only beginning to discover.

To continue reading this comprehensive paper, go here:
https://iefworld.org/ddahl24h_transformation

Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024

Fostering Religious Harmony for the Sake of Humanity 6 September 2024

The following is the “Joint Declaration of Istiqlal 2024”. Fostering Religious Harmony for the Sake of Humanity, signed by Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar during the Interreligious Meeting in the Jakarta Istiqlal Mosque.

As can be seen from the events of recent decades, our world is clearly facing two serious crises: dehumanization and climate change.

1. The global phenomenon of dehumanization is marked especially by widespread violence and conflict, frequently leading to an alarming number of victims. It is particularly worrying that religion is often instrumentalized in this regard, causing suffering to many, especially women, children and the elderly. The role of religion, however, should include promoting and safeguarding the dignity of every human life.

2. The human exploitation of creation, our common home, has contributed to climate change, leading to various destructive consequences such as natural disasters, global warming and unpredictable weather patterns. This ongoing environmental crisis has become an obstacle to the harmonious coexistence of peoples.

In response to these two crises, guided by our respective religious teachings and recognizing the contribution of Indonesia’s philosophical principle of “Pancasila”, we, together with the other religious leaders present, call for the following:

- i. The values shared by our religious traditions should be effectively promoted in order to defeat the culture of violence and indifference afflicting our world. Indeed, religious values should be directed towards promoting a culture of respect, dignity, compassion, reconciliation and fraternal solidarity in order to overcome both dehumanization and environmental destruction.
- ii. Religious leaders in particular, inspired by their respective spiritual narratives and traditions, should cooperate in responding to the above-mentioned crises, identifying their causes and taking appropriate action.
- iii. Since there is a single global human family, interreligious dialogue ought to be recognised as an effective instrument for resolving local, regional and international conflicts, especially those incited by the abuse of religion. Moreover, our religious beliefs and rituals have a particular capacity to speak to the human heart and thus foster a deeper respect for human dignity.
- iv. Acknowledging that a healthy, peaceful and harmonious living environment is vital for becoming true servants of God and custodians of creation, we sincerely call on all people of good will to take decisive action in order to maintain the integrity of the natural environment and its resources, for we have inherited them from past generations and hope to pass them on to our children and grandchildren.

Source: <https://www.osservatoreromano.va/en/news/2024-09/ing-036/fostering-reli...>

The 2024 state of the climate report: Perilous times on planet Earth

William J Ripple, et al., 8 October 2024

We are on the brink of an irreversible climate disaster. This is a global emergency beyond any doubt. Much of the very fabric of life on Earth is imperiled. We are stepping into a critical and unpredictable new phase of the climate crisis. For many years, scientists, including a group of more than 15,000, have sounded the alarm about the impending dangers of climate change driven by increasing greenhouse gas emissions and ecosystem change. For half a century, global warming has been correctly predicted even before it was observed—and not only by independent academic scientists but also by fossil fuel companies. Despite these warnings, we are still moving in the wrong direction; fossil fuel emissions have increased to an all-time high, the 3 hottest days ever occurred in July of 2024, and current policies have us on track for approximately 2.7 degrees Celsius (°C) peak warming by 2100. Tragically, we are failing to avoid serious impacts, and we can now only hope to limit the extent of the damage. We are witnessing the grim reality of the forecasts as climate impacts escalate, bringing forth scenes of unprecedented disasters around the world and human and nonhuman suffering. We find ourselves amid an abrupt climate upheaval, a dire situation never before encountered in the annals of human existence. We have now brought the planet into climatic conditions never witnessed by us or our prehistoric relatives within our genus, *Homo*.

Last year, we witnessed record-breaking sea surface temperatures, the hottest Northern Hemisphere extratropical summer in 2000 years, and the breaking of many other climate records. Moreover, we will see much more extreme weather in the coming years. Human-caused carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases are the primary drivers of climate change. As of 2022, global fossil fuel combustion and industrial processes account for approximately 90% of these emissions, whereas land-use change, primarily deforestation, accounts for approximately 10%.

Our aim in the present article is to communicate directly to researchers, policymakers, and the public. As scientists and academics, we feel it is our moral duty and that of our institutions to alert humanity to the growing threats that we face as clearly as possible and to show leadership in addressing them. In this report, we analyze the latest trends in a wide array of planetary vital signs. We also review notable recent climate-related disasters, spotlight important climate-related topics, and discuss needed policy interventions. This report is part of our series of concise annual updates on the state of the climate.

Read the report [here](#).

Source: *BioScience*, biae087, <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biae087>

Items of Interest

10 New Insights in Climate Science 2024/2025

The annual report 10 New Insights in Climate Science – jointly developed by Future Earth, The Earth League, and the World Climate Research Programme – equips policymakers with the latest and foremost climate science research, synthesized to help inform their work this year and beyond. “This report confirms that the world faces planetary scale challenges...yet it also provides clear pathways and solutions, demonstrating that with urgent, decisive action, we still can avoid unmanageable outcomes.”

For more information, check out: <https://10insightsclimate.science/>

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