LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

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Website	www.iefworld.org	Article Deadline 10 Aug. 2026
Article submission	newsletter@iefworld.org	
Secretariat Email	ief@iefworld.org	Christine Muller
President Email	ief@iefworld.org	Arthur Lyon Dahl Ph.D.
Postal address	12B Chemin de Maisonneuve, CH-1219 Chatelaine, Geneva, Switzerland	

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.

Newsletter Highlights

This newsletter continues the conversation about **Artificial Intelligence**, notably with the contribution of IEF President Arthur Dahl to a webinar hosted by the G20 Interfaith Forum, starting on page 5.

However, we will begin with **IEF activities**, sharing plans about this **fall's IEF online Conference and Online Course.** See pages 1 and 2.

It is always wonderful to receive reports from members and others who have participated in IEF activities and were inspired to take action in their own lives. In this spirit we are happy to highlight the great work of **Isabella Djalili-Devine,** who participated at last year's IEF conference. Read how she has used the knowledge and motivation gained at the conference for valuable service, starting on page 2.

And, of course, there is a lot more! See for yourself. ☺

IEF Busy Planning Online Course and IEF Conference

Sustainability - Redefining Prosperity Online Course, 7 Sept. – 18 Oct.

The 6-week online course has already 73 registrations! Participants come from all over the world, from Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Georgia, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, USA.

See the **course materials**: https://iefworld.org/SDHP

Zoom meetings will be held every Saturday in two sessions to accommodate different time zones:

1. 10am Nigeria, UK
   11am Paris (Europe), South Aftica
   2:30pm Delhi
   7pm Sydney
   9pm New Zealand

2. 10am PDT (Los Angeles
   12noon (Bogota)
   1pm EDT (Boston)
   6pm Lagos/London
   7pm CEST (Paris)

To **register for the course**, go here.

IEF Conference 14 – 18 October 2026

This year's conference will consist of presentations, discussions and collaborative spaces for all who cherish the planet and seek positive scientific and spiritual knowledge for the betterment of our home and all its people. It will be an ongoing conversation in 20 hours over five consecutive days.

The overall topic of the conference will be *Ethics in Pursuit of Social Change.*

Its supporting themes are:

- Ethical Crisis
- Healthy environment, healthy communities
- Reading our Reality: Pressing Issues
- Current action in the face of global crises
-Related issues

Valuable Actions Taken Following Last Year's IEF Conference

By Isabella Djalili-Devine

I went to my first International Environment Forum conference last year, and it turned out to be a real turning point for me. I hadn't come across IEF before, and walking into a space full of people who shared my interest in the environment and spoke about it through a Bahá'í framework felt nourishing. I learned a lot, met wonderful people, and left feeling both educated and energised.

I'd been interested in environmental issues for a long time, and I felt a real pull to do more work within that discourse professionally. The conference gave that pull real direction. I work in film and TV as a producer and editor, so it felt natural that my contribution should come through media — but I wanted to establish a new, independent project, distinct from my usual work. About two months after the conference, I founded Onederful (@onederful.earth) — a media channel that sheds light on what ordinary people are doing at the grassroots, and

through their work, to make a positive, sustainable impact on the earth, as well as cultural contributions to film and visual art that help us imagine a better world.

Two of the loveliest things to come out of Onederful so far both trace back to the IEF conference — one with an old friend, one with a new one. A few months in, I hosted my first film screening, held by Onederful and Tiny Speck Productions, (the production company I run with my family) — a screening of *Thank You for the Rain*, a documentary about a Kenyan farmer whose crops are failing because of climate change — as a space for people to talk with each other about the environment. It happened just after COP30, and I knew Monica Maghami had been there. Monica and I have actually known each other for about ten years, and she's the one who first invited me to the IEF conference — but it was there that our friendship found a new, shared focus on the environment. So, I invited her to open the discussion by sharing her experience and insights from COP30. She said yes, and it set the whole evening off beautifully. Here's a link to the video on Instagram about it. (YouTube link)

The other collaboration was with Nava Khorram Ahmad, who runs the Climate Education Centre. She told me about a story — Pacific Island youth taking real, impressive climate action, both through an international case and a local one. We got on a Zoom to talk through what we could learn from their example, found some existing documentary footage online, and ended up making a video together that showcased their work alongside our own reflections. It was a small but meaningful collaboration between Onederful and the Climate Education Centre. Here's an Instagram link to the video we made. (YouTube link)

Since founding Onederful, my hope is that it will grow into something bigger: more screenings, more videos, and a genuine media and film contribution to the climate discourse. I think one of the most urgent needs of our time is climate communication — not because people don't care, but because so many who do care and want to act need help understanding the problem more deeply and what they can do to directly contribute to a better world. I want Onederful to draw out the art and culture that already exists around these issues, and to help create new conversations that let people engage with climate as something woven into culture.

Isabella Djalili-Devine

And the conference's influence hasn't stayed only in the professional sphere — it's found its way into my grassroots community work too. I facilitate a junior youth group, and since the conference we've started talking more about environmental service projects. A small shift, but a meaningful one.

Gathering at New York BIC Offices

On UN Charter Day, a gathering at the New York BIC Offices explored the spiritual principles that can guide America's future as a nation among the community of nations.

Coinciding with the anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, the forum explored the role of the United States in the community of nations and what its future contribution might require.

The gathering concluded a series of public forums convened by the U.S. Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs following the release of "A Common Endeavor: Realizing the Promise of America," a message addressed by the Bahá'ís of the United States to "all who hold the promise of America in their hearts."

Most interesting for the IEF readership was the contribution by Karenna Gore. The [UN] Charter had been drawn chiefly to prevent another world war, and it did not speak directly to the care of the natural world, though “a right to a healthy environment,” Ms. Gore noted, has since been recognized by the UN. The human population has more than tripled since. Patterns of consumption that arose among relatively few peoples have been extended to many. Any reconsideration of the principles needed for the coming century, she suggested, must take fuller account of humanity’s relationship with land and nature.

This video shows the highlights of the gathering in 4 ½ minutes:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkdK1KXBH2M&t=26s

You can read more about the significance of the gathering here.

Development as a Moral Endeavor

Bahá'í World News Service
New Delhi, India

A new volume of 14 essays from the Indore Bahá’í Chair explores development as a moral endeavor shaped by the principles of oneness, justice and environmental stewardship.

What is lost when development is measured mainly by what can be counted?

For decades, progress has been assessed through rates of growth, levels of income, the reach of infrastructure, and the scale of production. These measures can reveal important dimensions of social and economic life. Yet they are less able to account for the dignity of human beings, the quality of social bonds, the wisdom held in diverse cultures, the responsibilities owed to future generations, or humanity’s relationship with the natural world.

For many thinkers and practitioners, the limitations of a narrowly material conception of progress have become increasingly apparent. What is needed, they suggest, is not a refinement of existing models alone, but a reconsideration of the assumptions on which those models rest.

This concern animated a recent gathering at the India International Centre in New Delhi, where the Bahá’í Office of Public Affairs of India and the Bahá’í Chair for Studies in Development at Devi Ahilya University launched a new book titled *Dialogues on Development: Rethinking Development for a Just and Sustainable Future*.

Read more about it here: https://iefworld.org/BWNS_development_moral

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Guidance for Social Action

Presentations for Study
relevant for youth and adults
with case studies

Values are of little use if they are not put into practice. Among the current priorities of the Bahá'í community around the world, beyond building the capacity in their own communities, are engaging in social action and participating in public discourse.

Youth are particularly motivated to engage in social action. The Bahá'í World Centre prepared in 2020 a useful compilation of guidance from the Bahá'í writings and institutions on

the Bahá'í principles and approaches to social action. The contents of this compilation have been divided into eighteen presentations, with each followed by a case study of a Bahá'í-inspired social action somewhere in the world. These can be used as class materials or for individual study by youth and adults.

Concepts and Principles

Social and Economic Development in the Bahá'í Teachings
Collective Maturity and an Ever-Advancing Civilisation
Oneness and Justice
The Role of Knowledge in Social Action

The Nature of Bahá'í Social and Economic Development

Coherence Between Material and Spiritual Dimensions of Existence
Capacity Building, Participation and Organic Growth
Development Projects
Emergence of Social Action
Community Development and Movement of Populations

Methods and Approaches

Learning and Systematic Action
Consultation and Collaboration
Utilising Material Means

Themes for Social and Economic Development

Social Action in Education
Economic Principles for Social Action
Social Action and the Economic System
Agriculture for Social Action
Social Action for Health
Arts, Media, and Technology for Social Action

Artificial Intelligence and the Planet

By Arthur Dahl

On 9 July 2026, the G20 Interfaith Forum and the International Academy for Multicultural Cooperation organised the first webinar in a series on Artificial Intelligence (AI) on the topic AI and the Planet (recording available), looking at the environmental, social and economic impacts of this rapidly expanding information technology at the planetary level. The following is my contribution on a three-person panel.

The challenge of AI in caring for our planet leads to two more fundamental questions: what role should technology play in addressing such problems and determining our future, and should the motivation in developing a technology like AI be private profit or the public good? Until we address these questions of humanity and governance, the use of AI for managing the Earth system will be marginal at best.

The role of technology

As an environmental scientist specialising in complex systems, and a member of the Bahá'í Faith motivated by spiritual values and a higher human purpose, I see technology as a tool, while deciding on its proper use is a social question that should not be left to developers with

narrow interests. Our values and ethical concerns must come first. AI can help to monitor our planetary predicament, but something more is needed to motivate us to change our behaviour and to create the political will to implement the good intentions in so many environmental agreements.

The materialistic view of human consciousness and purpose behind AI ignores the perspective of all Faith traditions that we have a spiritual dimension beyond our physical and intellectual capacities, to love the divine essence (God), to overcome our lower selfish nature and rise to humble selfless service to others, to refine our character, and to show respect and stewardship for the creation, our beautiful and fragile planet. Can we leave our spiritual growth to AI? AI could be taught to recite prayers for us, but what good would that do? AI has no soul.

AI magnifies the reach and impact of social media, designed to be addictive and to reinforce confirmation biases with algorithms trained on our personal data. This gives it the potential to manipulate our beliefs and emotions, whether for political, ideological or commercial ends, with great danger for our systems of governance, public participation, justice and equity, and unity of purpose. Cultivating emotions such as fear, hate, aggressivity, prejudice, and rejection of the "other" is more effective in drawing people in and creating dependence. Violence is newsworthy. The resulting identities are confirmed and reinforced even if they are damaging to society and the environment. The technologies provide a replacement for real social interaction, an alternative to true friendships, a compensation for family failures and social breakdown. In a world where religious traditions are fading or rejected, the resulting vacuum in values and belonging is easily filled by artificial AI replacements. But where does that leave our true humanity?

Just as nuclear science led to both nuclear power and atomic bombs, so can AI open new perspectives for civilisation, or dehumanise us and trap us as passive consumers manipulated for nefarious ends while contributing to the rape of the planet. Both require strengthened global governance to encourage the former and prevent the latter.

Continue reading Dr. Dahl's contribution here or watch the excellent webinar here.

When AI hurts the climate—and when it helps
Can AI be used wisely in a warming world?

Climate scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe contributed important knowledge and insights about AI in one of her newsletters which is available here.

Opportunities, risks and impacts of artificial intelligence

Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI

On 3 July in New York, and then 6 July 2026 in Geneva, at the Global Dialogue on AI Governance, the United Nations launched the *Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI* created by the General Assembly, providing an evidence-based assessment of opportunities, risks and impacts of artificial intelligence (AI). While the report presents a balanced analysis of the risks and opportunities of AI, the catalog of the

dangers of ungoverned AI is frightening, confirming many earlier warnings and calling for urgent action before it is too late.

The report says that potential benefits of AI are enormous. Deployed and applied thoughtfully, AI can support progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, advance health science and increase access to education. At the same time, the rapid pace of technological development and the breadth of potential applications present policymakers with significant challenges. The rapid, unchecked deployment of the technology at scale also presents considerable risks, including harms to the mental health of users, potential use as a destructive tool, impacts on social, economic and environmental systems, and challenges associated with controlling the technology.

What does the evidence show? Artificial intelligence capabilities are advancing faster than the ability to measure or govern them. Only a handful of actors have trained frontier AI models. The inputs and outcomes of AI are geographically and linguistically uneven. The AI divide is not just about access, but about capacity to influence AI development. For AI to be useful, it must be supported by an enabling environment. Agentic artificial intelligence is a governance step change. AI can erode the shared reality. AI is transforming human rights, including children's rights.

Continue reading this article here: https://iefworld.org/UN_AI2026

The link to the report is available here: https://iefworld.org/UN_AI2026

Source: The report's Executive Summary: https://www.un.org/independent-international-scientific-panel-ai/sites/default/files/2026-07/en_executive_summary.pdf

Spiritual Exploration of Possible Pathways for Providing Energy Security for All

The G 20 Interfaith Forum

As part of the road to the 2026 G20, the G20 Interfaith Forum brought together faith perspectives with Indigenous, feminist, anti-racist, and postcolonial perspectives to explore various possible pathways that might be pursued within the global economy to provide energy security for all. They envisioned how communities can be empowered to understand their local reality and to set their own priorities that reflect their culture and values, while coordinating with higher levels of collective interest at the regional, national, and global levels of shared responsibility for the common good and our Earth system.

Go here to watch the excellent webinar:
https://www.multiculturalcooperation.net/content/spiritual-exploration-energy-security

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