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.

SPECIAL CONFERENCE EDITION

This newsletter contains comprehensive information about the IEF 30th Annual Conference which will take place entirely online on 14 – 18 October 2026.

You will be able to choose attending any of the 18 conversations. You can select according to your interest in specific topics or based on the time you will have available. The conference team planned the programme with the intention to provide ample time for conversation among conference participants.

Mark your calendar and register for the conference now!

Conference information starts on page 2. This will be followed by three articles of interest to the IEF community.

Welcome to New IEF Members and Associates

At its 23 August meeting, the IEF Board approved the following applications and warmly welcomes them to the IEF Community:

MEMBERS
Isabella Djalili-Devine (UK)
Jennifer Longociu (UK)
Katrina Rogers (UK)

ASSOCIATES
Katherine Gray (UK)
Ilona Kater (UK)
Mohammed Faruq (Bangladesh)
Pradeep Nair (India)

IEF 30th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Ethics in Pursuit of Social Change

18 Online Conversations over 5 Days

14 - 18 October 2026

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

Register for the conference here:
https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/OBOAFdkITSmzSbvz8aczwQ#/registration
Upon registration, you will receive one Zoom link which will work for all the conference events.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

There will be **two conference sessions** every day, **except for Saturday 17 October** which has only one conference event. Generally, each 2-hour session is divided into two parts.

These are the **starting times** of the two sessions in different time zones:

1. SESSION
08:00 London
09:00 CEST Central Europe
10:00 Nairobi, Kenya
10:30 Tehran, Iran
12:30 New Delhi, India
15:00 Perth, Australia
18:00 Sydney, Australia

2. SESSION
20:00 London
21:00 CEST Central Europe
12 noon Pacific Time (Los Angeles)
14:00 Bogota, Colombia
3pm Eastern Time (Boston)

Ethical Crisis

1. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

08.00–09.00 London; 09.00–10.00 Central Europe

Welcome and introduction to the conference (IEF president Dr Arthur Dahl)

Presentation: **Replacing economic assumptions with ethical alternatives**
Presenter: **Dr Arthur Dahl,** Environmental scientist, specialist in complex systems, retired Deputy Assistant Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme.

09.00–10.00 London; 10.00–11.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **The Future of Agriculture - Rethinking Agriculture as a Social Ecological System: Lessons from Community Based Examples**
Presenter: **Babak Farrokhzad,** A specialist in measuring the resilience of computer and automation systems

2. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

20.00–21.00 London; 21.00–22.00 Central Europe; 3 - 4pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **The Nature of Laws, and the Laws of Nature: Towards a Planetary Jurisprudence**
Presenter: **Payam Akhavan,** Inaugural Chair in Human Rights at Massey College, University of Toronto, Barrister at Twenty Essex in London, and a former UN prosecutor at The Hague.

21.00–22.00 London; 22.00–23.00 Central Europe; 4 - 5pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **Climate change obligations of States: What can we learn from the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice?**
Presenter: **Halldór Thorgeirsson,** Chair of the Icelandic Climate Council, served in strategic positions at the UN Climate Change Secretariat (UNFCCC) in Bonn 2004–18; former climate negotiator for Iceland

Healthy Environment, Healthy Communities

1. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

08.00–09.00 London; 09.00–10.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **The role of faith communities in creating healthy, environmentally sustainable communities**
Presenter: **Maureen Sier,** Interfaith Advisor, former Director of Interfaith Scotland

09.00–10.00 London; 10.00–11.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Convergence of Agriculture, Health & Education: Exploring Practical Means for Better Human Health and a Natural Environment** (A Focus on Junior Youth)
Presenter: **Faraz Maani**, Managing director at Praxis Agricultural Co., in Dali, China

2. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

20.00–21.00 London; 21.00–22.00 Central Europe; 3 - 4pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **Lost in Translation: Approaches for Effective Interdisciplinary Collaboration**
Presenter: **Ilona Kater**, an Institute Affiliate at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, and Director of Studies in Geography at Christ's College, Cambridge

21.00–22.00 London; 22.00–23.00 Central Europe; 4 - 5pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **Rethinking Progress for the Common Good: Our Sustainable Planet in a Technological Age**
Presenter: **Monica Maghami,** Founder and CEO of SUSTAIN-NOBILITY ADVISORY, regulatory lawyer specialising in AI, sustainability and technology governance

Reading Our Reality: Pressing Issues

1. SESSION (One 1-Hour Conversation and Two 1/2-Hour Conversations)

08.00–09.00 London; 09.00–10.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Building Resilient Rural Communities: Ethics, Education and Agriculture in Pursuit of Social Change**
Presenter: **Steve Worth**, Honorary Associate Professor at University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa; over 40 years' practical experience in agricultural and rural development in Southern Africa

09.00–09.30 London; 10.00–10.30 Central Europe

Presentation: **Spiritual roots of care of the environment**
Presenters: **Wendi Momen,** social activist and advocate, author, book editor, and **Moojan Momen**, historian, author and retired family doctor

09.30 - 10.00 London; 10.30 - 11.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Ethics in Pursuit of Social Change: The Example of the Work of the YANA Foundation**
Presenter: **Nandana Wijelal,** Founder and Executive Director of the YANA Foundation in Sri Lanka

2. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

20.00–21.00 London; 21.00–22.00 Central Europe, 3 - 4pm EDT (Boston)

Panel Discussion: **Local Environmental Actions from civil society and business community perspectives**

- *Presentation:* **Reading Reality and Developing Unified Action within a Diversity of Needs**
  Presenter: **Christine Muller**, Teacher of music and the environment
- *Presentation:* **Uniting People, Nature, and Spirit: Local Environmental Action as a Pathway to Community Building and Social Progress**
  Presenter: **Valarie Atwood,** Mom, wife, educator, environmentalist, and Bahá'í passionate about helping people connect with nature, care for the Earth, and build stronger communities
- *Presentation:* **Cooperative De werkhaven: from a conversation to a regional cooperative for a regenerative future**
  Presenter: **Sjoerd Luteyn**, Co-founder of soul.com, Representative of ebbf - ethical business building the future

21.00–22.00 London; 22.00–23.00 Central Europe, 4 - 5pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **Learning to walk the path of transformation: the role of knowledge, justice and reflection.**
Presenter: **Sylvia Karlsson Vinkhuyzen**, Associate Professor with the Public Administration and Policy Group of Wageningen University, the Netherlands. researching global public governance of the environment.

Current Actions in the Face of Global Crises

1. SINGLE SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

08.00–09.00 London; 09.00–10.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Healthy environment, healthy communities**
Presenter: **Laurent Mesbah,** Actively involved in education, youth empowerment, and sustainable development projects with international organizations in the Balkans and around the world

09.00–10.00 London; 10.00–11.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **The Pacific Under Pressure: Super Typhoons and Ocean Governance in the Mariana Islands**
Presenter: **Nava Khorram**, Co-Founder and Executive Director at Climate Education Centre and an EU Climate Pact Partner

Integrating Spiritual Principles in Issues that Matter

1. SESSION (Two 1-Hour Conversations)

08.00–09.00 London; 09.00–10.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Mindsets that galvanize ethical alternatives**
Presenter: **Victoria Thoresen,** Adjunct professor, University of Fort Hare, South Africa, UNESCO Chair and emeritus, Center for Collaborative Learning for Sustainable Lifestyles, Inland Norway University

09.00–10.00 London; 10.00–11.00 Central Europe

Presentation: **Energy security at a time of global energy crisis**
Presenter: **Roya Meshki Kataria,** An energy policy advisor and an expert in urban climate action, currently working in energy security policy as an advisor for the UK energy regulator

Presentation: **Women and widows as agents of change in their communities**
Presenter: **Wendi Momen**, social activist and advocate, author, book editor

2. SESSION (One 2-Hour Conversation)

20.00–22.00 London; 21.00–23.00 Central Europe; 3 - 5pm EDT (Boston)

Presentation: **A Systems Perspective on Disintegration and Integration in Our World**
Presenter: **Amin Moghaddam,** program and project manager responsible for structural development projects centered around business process and information technology transformations

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The IEF warmly thanks the following conference partners:
ebbf – ethical business building the future; BASED-UK (Baha'i Agency for Social and Economic Development, UK); Advance - a Baha'i-inspired organisation that promotes education, justice, and entrepreneurship for women; Ashworth Charitable Trust, and Widows Rights International.

Climate Governance

Maja Groff
Mobilizing an Earth Governance Alliance
LinkedIn 8 September 2026

Global challenges require systemic, planetary-scale solutions. The article below by IEF member Maja Groff details how MEGA and the Climate Governance Commission are driving next-generation institutional reforms. IEF collaborates in MEGA and is represented on the MEGA steering committee.

The Moment is Now: Tackling the Governance Dimensions of the Climate Challenge

The evidence on the ground is unambiguous: 2024 was the hottest year in recorded history and extreme weather events already this summer alone — heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires — are compounding one another at a pace that already challenges adaptation plans and budgets. The human and economic costs are mounting, and the ecological signals from our Earth's self-regulating climate system and tipping-points are growing harder to ignore.

Yet insufficient attention is often paid to governance and to feasible plans to improve international governance in particular. We will need wider systemic efforts to address current Earth system disruptions: better international cooperation is a virtual inevitability, given the nature of the challenges we face.

Mobilising an Earth Governance Alliance, MEGA, takes forward the pioneering work of the Climate Governance Commission (see this key report), co-chaired by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, President of the 73rd UN General Assembly, Johan Rockström, Director, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and other aligned partners, and looks to drive forward the governance discussions we need.

MEGA supports strategic enhancements in current global institutions and the possibility of bringing new ones into being – for instance, a possible International Environment Court, building on the momentum of recent important opinions of international courts and tribunals. This work is not being done in a vacuum; there are various signs of increased ambition and creativity in the international system.

One of these was at the Santa Marta conference earlier this year. Co-hosted by Colombia and the Netherlands, a committed coalition of nations are already pushing forward concrete fossil-fuel transition roadmaps, working in parallel and in a complementary fashion to the broader UN process. MEGA has long advocated for “smart coalitions” of values-based high ambition states, innovating and pushing forward new frontiers in international action and cooperation, for the benefit of all.

Working with partners across the Global South and North, the Climate Governance Commission and MEGA have developed a mutually-reinforcing set of practical, high-value proposals to strengthen the international governance architecture on which a serious climate and Earth system response depends. These are not abstract proposals, but are rather grounded steps forward with technical and diplomatic foundations already in place, for example:

• Targeted **COP strengthening with a focus on accountability**

• An **International Earth system Risk Response mechanism** to bring together existing institutions for high level coordination and accelerated action across the international system (see, for example, this proposal by the UN Secretary General)

• Enhanced **international Earth system risk monitoring and high level reporting** – we should not be flying blind into unprecedented and cross-cutting international risks to the “safe operating space” of humanity

• An international **Climate and Nature Policy Innovation Hub**, for policy excellence and accelerated outcome-driven design

• The foundational design work for conceiving of next-generation institutions in an era of Earth system disruption, including an exploration of a possible **International Environment Court** and a strengthened **UNEP/Global Environment Organization**.

Between 80 and 89% of people globally want their governments to take stronger climate action, according to a landmark study spanning 125 countries, forming the foundation of the 89 Percent

Project. This is not a minority or niche position. It is an overwhelming, cross-cultural, cross-generational mandate that is not yet reflected in the ambition of our shared governance.

This gives us confidence that we can together improve our shared governance, particularly with the depth and strength of emerging coalitions – including governments, civil society and leading scientific and legal institutions across every region.

The question is not whether better climate and Earth system governance, across Planetary Boundaries, is possible. It is whether we will act with sufficient urgency and skill to realize it.

Together we can make this possible with your support. To find out how you or your organisation can get involved please go to MEGA.

SOURCE: LinkedIn https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/moment-now-tackling-governance-dimensions-climate-challenge-extue/

Strange and Astonishing Things

Excerpts from an article by Wendy M. Heller,
published in the *Bahá'í World* on 31 July 2026:
https://bahaiworld.bahai.org/library/strange-and-astonishing-things/

While we recommend reading the entire essay, the following passages are selected and arranged for busy people to have access to its highly interesting and important content. They only include a few references. Go to the essay to see all the sources.

The essay revolves around the following words of Baha'u'llah:

"Strange and astonishing things (*asbáb-i-'ajíbiy-i-gharíbih*) exist in the earth but they are hidden from the minds and the understanding of men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal."

Wendy Heller tells the story how these words were utterly incomprehensible to the people living at that time. She also provides a deep reflection on the meaning of wisdom and the difficulty for humans to understand radically new things that are beyond anything they have previously experienced and that don't fit into any existing concept or scientific theory.

In an opening paragraph, she points out: 'Abdu'l-Bahá once assured the Bahá'ís that the wisdom of a perplexing stipulation in the Sacred Scriptures would "erelong be made manifest as clearly as the sun at high noon."

The quote containing the "strange and astonishing things" is introduced in this central paragraph:

[Bahá'u'lláh] warned of the danger of abandoning the principle of moderation, stating that "if a thing is carried to excess it will become a source of evil"—as evidenced by the alarming tendencies displayed by Western civilization, which was already harnessing the power of modern technology to invent ever more deadly weaponry. "An infernal engine hath been devised," He wrote, "and hath proved so cruel a weapon of destruction that its like none hath ever witnessed or heard." He may have been referring to the Maxim gun: invented in 1884, it was the first automatic machine gun, could fire over five hundred rounds per minute, and would become one of the deadliest weapons in modern history. The "deeply-rooted and overwhelming corruptions" represented by such armaments, Bahá'u'lláh asserted, could not be expunged until the peoples of the world became reconciled and united in a common aim and a universal faith. Then He wrote: "Strange and astonishing things exist in the earth but they are hidden from the minds and the understanding of

men. These things are capable of changing the whole atmosphere of the earth and their contamination would prove lethal."

Today we have no trouble making sense of that statement; if we are perplexed, it is not by the statement itself—because we know it is true—but by the fact that He wrote it in 1889, decades before anyone else knew it was true. Those "things" in the earth that can lethally contaminate the atmosphere are now such an established part of humanity's common knowledge that it is not even necessary to name them, because the answer is so obvious as to be clear as the sun at high noon. But that was not always the case.

Wendy Heller then explains in depth the history of Physics and the evolution of human understanding of the atom.

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

Limiting Climate Overshoot

UN Environment Programme

A new spotlight report by the UN Environment Programme finds that as global temperature rise gets set to cross 1.5°C, pushing climate risks and impacts to dangerous new heights, the world must strive to return to below 1.5°C as soon as possible and simultaneously reduce the vulnerability of societies, communities and economies to climate impacts. The report, Limiting Overshoot: Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways towards return, finds that the world can achieve this goal by acting now to get on an 'overshoot, peak, and decline' pathway.

The following are the headlines of its key messages only. You can find more key messages on the IEF website here: https://iefworld.org/UNEP_overshoot2026

Despite some progress on addressing climate change, global temperature rise is set to cross 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, likely within the next few years. There are no good outcomes in remaining above 1.5°C.

Following an 'overshoot, peak and decline' pathway is the best remaining option to bring temperatures to or below 1.5°C by the end of the century, which remains the goal, and adapt to unavoidable impacts.

Rapid, collective and global action is vital: lower peak warming and shorter exceedance duration will reduce risks and impacts, make efforts to help communities cope less difficult and less expensive, and increase the chances of bringing temperatures back down.

Equity and justice must form the core of strategies to protect the vulnerable, create a just transition and secure a liveable future for coming generations.

Mitigation and adaptation are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. They must advance together, while being responsive to emerging risks.

Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) – the process of removing carbon from the air and storing it through afforestation or other means – will be needed in addition to, not instead of, sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, but these methods come with risks and trade-offs that limit their potential and need to be carefully governed.

A return to or below 1.5 is uncertain. Even if a return to below 1.5°C is secured, many nations and communities will face irreversible losses and permanently changed conditions. This raises issues of justice, power and political legitimacy, which will require new, inclusive governance arrangements.

SOURCES: UNEP report https://wedocs.unep.org/items/156d074c-ab1d-4833-acf8-6343589ede9b
Key messages: https://wedocs.unep.org/rest/api/core/bitstreams/9f6bd957-8d35-402d-bb4e-c7c17096e592/content

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