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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.

THE IEF CONFERENCE IS TAKING PLACE NOW!

You can still register for the IEF 30th Annual Conference which is being held online on 14 – 18 October 2026.

Register for the conference here!

Upon registration, you will receive one Zoom link which will work for all the conference events.

For the **conference program, go** here.

You can choose to attend any of the 18 conversations – just select according to your interest and schedule.

Newsletter Content

This newsletter features **three important reports about the state of our world:**

- *Planetary Health Check 2026* from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research
- *UN Global Risk Report*
- *Limiting Overshoot: Navigating exceedance of 1.5°C and pathways towards return* from the UN Environment Programme

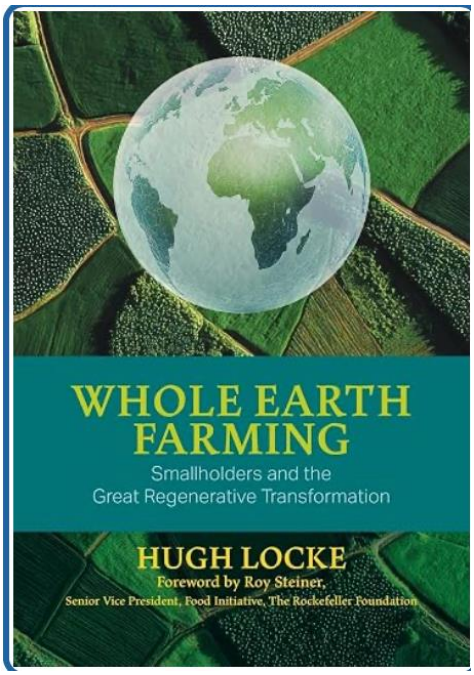
It will close with a thoughtful article about **Artificial Intelligence,** published in Common Dreams: *Can AI's Threat Awaken Humanity in Time?* It was written by David Korten and closely aligns with a Baha'i perspective.

In this context, it will be useful for you to know that the IEF website now has a **special page on Information Technology!** Currently it is linking to six recent postings on the subject. Check it out here: https://iefworld.org/information_technology.

However, all these reports and the overwhelming amount of knowledge available to us can only contribute to the betterment of the world if we use that knowledge in **action!**

That's why we start with a brief article about the recently published book by Hugh Locke that exemplifies what one person can accomplish with knowledge combined with a deep spiritual motivation. We all have opportunities to act in small and big ways – all depending on our opportunities and circumstances. ☺

Whole Earth Farming: Smallholders and the Great Regenerative Transformation



A new book by Hugh Locke, *Whole Earth Farming: Smallholders and the Great Regenerative Transformation* was published by George Ronald on 19 September 2026. It tells the story of Hugh's co-founding of the Smallholder Farmers Alliance in Haiti in 2010, working with over 10,000 SFA farmer members as they re-shape the agricultural future of this embattled country.

The book introduces a new approach to agriculture that is built on spiritual principles drawn from the Bahá'í Faith, treating them as open source foundational truths anyone can test, adapt, and build on. Regenerative agriculture cannot rely on better farm practices alone, it needs a revolution grounded in core truths capable of holding the movement together across cultures, continents and generations.

Planetary Health Check 2026

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

The Planetary Health Check is a yearly report on the state of our planet. It presents the most up-to-date assessments of the Planetary Boundaries, gives thorough introductions into cutting-edge science, and spotlights especially relevant aspects of our planet's health. This 2026 edition places a special focus on carbon sinks and novel entities.

The Planetary Boundaries Science (PBScience) project was launched in 2023 to address critical gaps in our understanding and monitoring of the Earth system. Utilising advanced simulation modeling, incorporating the latest available measurement datasets and synthesizing new insights from Earth system science literature, PBScience provides annual Planetary Health Checks based on the Planetary Boundaries framework. PBScience strives to elevate global awareness and drive action towards maintaining planetary stability.

The Planetary Boundaries

The Planetary Boundaries define rules that help us keep our planet safe, healthy, and protect life on Earth.

Human activities have pushed Earth beyond its Safe Operating Space. The planet's natural resilience is weakening: Global warming is accelerating, ecosystems are showing clear signs of degradation, and early warning signs of tipping points are emerging in key systems. We have entered the Anthropocene — an era where human activity dominates the Earth system.

To safeguard the Earth's resilience and stability, we must bring the planet back into its Planetary Boundaries. These boundaries are scientifically defined guardrails that ensure the Earth's health. Stay within them, and the Earth stays our dependable home — breach them, and we risk irreversible damage to our very own life support system. Today, seven out of nine boundaries have been transgressed.

SOURCE: https://www.planetaryhealthcheck.org/

UN Global Risk Report

September 2026

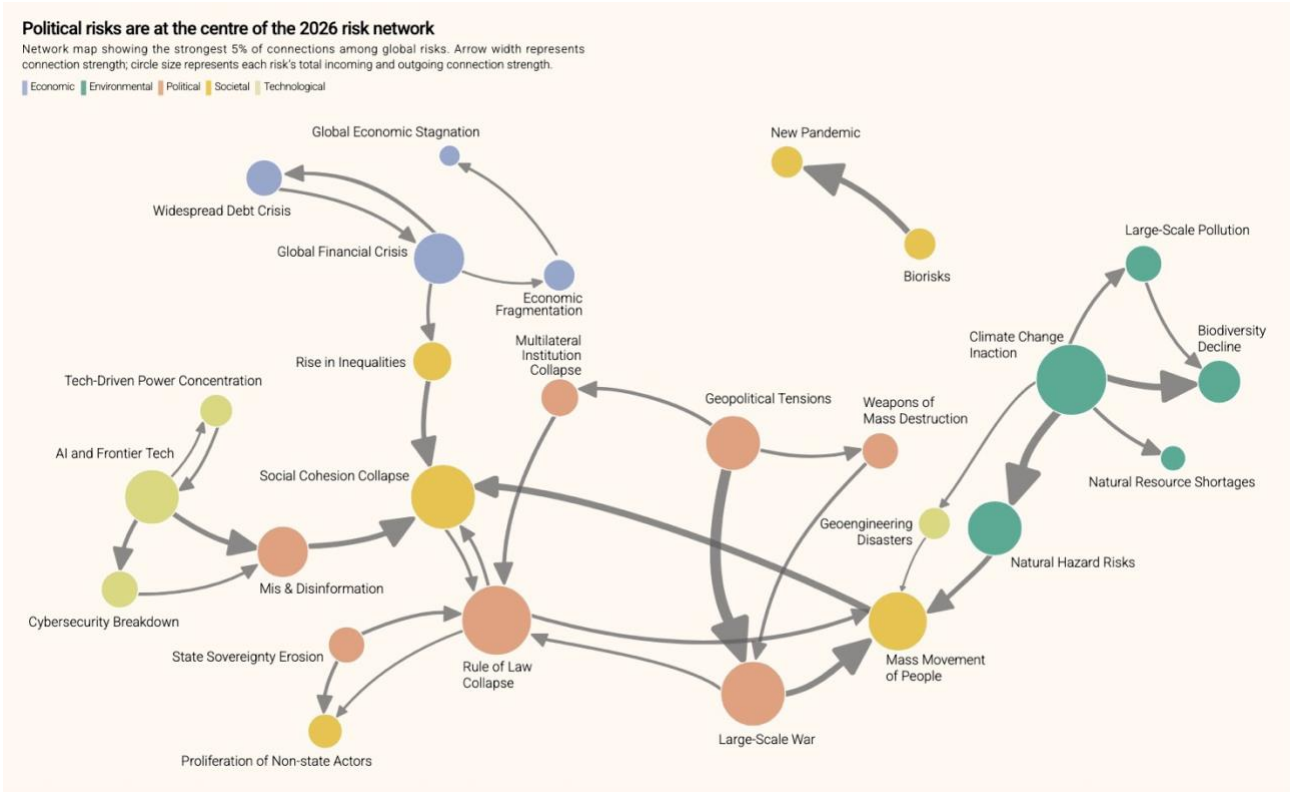
To better understand and prepare for complex risks, the United Nations has conducted a risk perception survey on 1,300 stakeholders across 155 countries.

The survey asked what are the most important global risks, which risks are we least prepared for, when will risks materialise, what enables or blocks risk management, and how are global risks interconnected?

The UN Secretary-General said that "the findings are sobering. Political risks have moved centre stage. The prospect of large-scale war is seen as far more important and far more immediate than it was two years ago. At the same time, the institutions expected to respond are seen as less able

to act, especially in areas like artificial intelligence, where innovation is outpacing our capacity to govern it."

"Yet one conviction holds firm: respondents still see joint action between governments as by far the most effective means of prevention. No country, no company, no institution can face these risks alone."



The Key Findings:

The global risk landscape has become more complex and more dynamic.

Political risks moved to the center. The risk of large-scale war was seen as especially prominent and increasingly imminent – 36 per cent of respondents now expect it within one year.

Concerns about AI and frontier technologies, including the risk of power concentration, rose sharply.

Climate change inaction remains the single most important of all 28 risks, though environmental risks as a category slightly decreased in perceived importance.

Six years after the Covid-19 pandemic, attention has shifted. Perceived importance of biorisks and new pandemics fell more than any other risk measured.

Joint action between governments is still perceived as the most effective response to global risks.

SOURCE: https://www.un.org/en/global-risk-report
Download the report: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_2026_global_risk_report.pdf

Limiting Climate Overshoot

UN Environment Programme

A new spotlight report by the UN Environment Programme finds that as the 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.

In the September issue of LEAVES, we featured the headlines of the report's key messages. Below you find UNEP's beautifully written press release.

World set to cross 1.5°C global warming, but can still limit, adapt to and return from higher temperatures

UNEP Press Release, 2 September 2026

- Report puts best-case scenario peak temperature rise at 1.8°C; others suggest over 2°C
- Above 1.5°C, climate impacts and risks of tipping points intensify with every fraction of a degree
- 'Overshoot, peak and decline' pathway best remaining option to help vulnerable nations and communities cope and return to below 1.5°C

Nairobi, 2 September 2026 – Global temperature rise is set to cross 1.5°C, likely within the next few years, pushing climate risks and impacts to increasingly dangerous heights, but it is still possible to bring temperatures down and achieve global goals in the Paris Agreement, according to a new UN Environment Programme (UNEP) report.

The report, Limiting Overshoot, identifies an 'overshoot, peak, and decline' pathway as the best remaining option to minimize the magnitude and duration of this overshoot and try to return to below 1.5°C as soon as possible.

"This summer's scorching heat, raging wildfires and deadly floods are a warning of what lies ahead. We must make the overshoot above 1.5 degrees as small and short as possible. That demands an overshoot of ambition" said UN Secretary-General Antőnio Guterres.

This pathway would minimize peak temperature rise through immediate and sustained cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, including methane, on the road to net-zero, and bring down temperatures through long-term net-negative emissions, with carefully governed Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) – the process of removing carbon from the air and storing it through afforestation or other means – an essential part of the mix.

At the same time, following this pathway would involve adaptation actions that reduce vulnerability to the current, expected and unexpected impacts of climate change on societies, communities and economies – although there will likely be limits to adaptation and irreversible impacts, especially if peak temperatures are not minimized. The report stresses such a pathway would reduce risks and impacts, make adaptation less difficult and expensive, and increase the chances of lowering temperatures.

“There are no good outcomes if we remain above 1.5°C. Across the globe, extreme heatwaves are already proving that climate impacts will strike faster, hit harder, and last longer - costing more lives and causing deeper disruption,” said Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. “Now is the time we must double down on climate action. We can – and must – get on the right path. By cutting greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening resilience and adaptation, and ensuring exceedance of 1.5°C is as small and short as possible.”

Devastating impacts

The most optimistic scenario will see temperature rise peak at 1.8°C above pre-industrial levels, above the goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C set by the Paris Agreement. Most other scenarios predict higher peaks.

Above 1.5°C, risks and impacts will intensify with every extra fraction of a degree and every year. Anticipated impacts include intensified extreme weather, ecosystem loss, and submersion of Small Island Developing States and low-lying coastal cities. Severe damage to human health, food security, water supplies, nature, cities, infrastructure, and economies is expected.

The report warns that the likelihood of crossing irreversible tipping points increases with the magnitude and duration of higher temperatures. These include the destabilization of major ice sheets, degradation of the Amazon rainforest and disruption of the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (the system of currents that moves warm surface water north and cold deep water south, playing a key role in regulating the climate). Some impacts may emerge abruptly, while others will accumulate over time.

Considering the scale of the risks and the co-benefits of climate interventions such as a rapid transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy – improving air quality and public health, lowering energy costs and increasing access to electricity – the report urges accelerated, collective and global action to get on an overshoot, peak and decline pathway. How quickly and strongly this action happens will define the shape and trajectory of the pathway.

Conditions for success

Strong political will and multilateralism, effective policies, inclusive governance, and finance are all important enabling conditions for action – and equity and justice must underpin all responses. Countries with greater responsibility for climate change should act the fastest with the greatest ambition.

The report also finds that mitigation and adaptation, which are mutually reinforcing, must advance together, while being responsive to emerging risks. Interventions that achieve both mitigation and adaptation goals – such as nature-based cooling – should be prioritized. Adaptation set up now forms the foundation for efforts to come, but it must become transformational and responsive to evolving non-linear and abruptly arising risks – including those that will harm mitigation efforts.

The report emphasizes that net-zero is a milestone towards net-negative, with CDR needed in addition to, not instead of, sustained reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. However, CDR can only contribute credibly to a return below 1.5°C if peak warming remains well below 2°C and all residual emissions are reduced. Strong governance frameworks for CDR will be critical to allow responsible deployment and manage implications for environmental integrity, equity, scale.

Responding to a changed future

Years of inaction mean that even if a return to below 1.5°C is secured, irreversible losses and permanently changed conditions are certain. Many communities may be forced to relocate or change livelihoods, while societies will face the challenge of re-adjustment. This raises issues of

justice, power, and political legitimacy, which will require new, inclusive governance arrangements to resolve difficult issues. This report is a reminder that an overshoot, peak and decline pathway is a next generation climate frontier, but one which cannot be left unattended to for the next generation to tackle. Immediate action is required for such a pathway to remain possible.

Go here to read the report's key messages as defined by UNEP:
https://iefworld.org/UNEP_overshoot2026 (Scroll down)

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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Can AI's Threat Awaken Humanity in Time?

David Korten, *Common Dreams*
Other News, 4 October 2026

Below are excerpts from this article. To read it in its entirety, go here:
https://iefworld.org/Korten_AI2026

We are now faced once more with the logic of a global suicide pact. Everyone may recognize the danger, yet no participant feels free to withdraw from the competition.

Artificial intelligence confronts humanity with a paradox of historic significance. Used to enhance human cooperation and shared learning in service to life, AI can be a powerful tool for creating a world that works for all. Used as a competitive weapon in the pursuit of profit, political control, and military dominance, it will almost certainly accelerate humanity's path to self-extinction.

The threat is real and immediate. Yet it may also be our greatest source of hope. AI confronts us more clearly than any previous technology with a truth we have long resisted: humanity cannot survive as a collection of competing individuals, businesses, and nations pursuing their separate advantage without regard for the wellbeing of the whole. By making the consequences of our current path unmistakable and potentially imminent, AI may provide the most powerful incentive humanity has ever experienced to undertake the deep cultural transformation on which our common future now depends.

Public discussion commonly treats AI as an independent intelligence that may one day turn against its human creators. This directs our attention to the wrong question. AI does not possess an independent moral purpose. It is a human-created tool that serves the purposes of those who develop, own, and control it. The defining question is not whether AI will choose to control humanity. It is whether humanity can transcend its commitment to competition and domination sufficiently to govern AI—and itself—in service to life.

Within our current global culture, AI is being developed primarily as an instrument of competitive advantage. Businesses use it to eliminate jobs, monitor workers, manipulate consumers, appropriate human creativity, capture personal information, and achieve market dominance. Political actors use it to spread falsehoods, inflame fear, and discredit opponents. Governments

use it to expand surveillance, while militaries use it to identify targets, guide weapons, and develop autonomous killing systems.

The justification for developing AI as quickly as possible is always essentially the same: If we do not do it, our competitors will. Corporate executives may recognize that eliminating millions of jobs could devastate society, yet fear losing to businesses that move more quickly. National leaders may understand that autonomous weapons could escape human control, yet fear defeat by nations that develop them first. Political leaders may know that AI-generated deception is destroying democracy, yet fear losing to opponents who use it more aggressively.

This is the logic of a global suicide pact. Everyone may recognize the danger, yet no participant feels free to withdraw from the competition.

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Our only enduring protection is therefore a transformation of the global culture that determines how we humans use AI. This requires that we move from a civilization organized around competition for money and power to a civilization dedicated to the wellbeing of living Earth and all its humans and other living beings. What many of us choose to call an Ecological Civilization.

Such a civilization will recognize Earth as a living community, not a storehouse of commodities waiting to be claimed, extracted, and sold for profit. It will understand that human wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the whole and that our distinctive capacity for conscious choice carries a responsibility to care for the life that sustains us. It will organize economies to meet the needs of all while healing Earth, distributing power, limiting extremes of wealth, restoring local self-reliance, and holding businesses accountable to the communities and ecosystems that depend on them.

An Ecological Civilization will not eliminate competition. It will encourage competition, not to dominate and exploit others, but rather to be the most creative and excellent in advancing a culture of cooperation and mutual responsibility on behalf of the wellbeing of the whole. Essential AI capabilities will be governed as part of a global information commons. The knowledge on which they depend—created over generations by countless human beings—will be treated as a shared inheritance. Its use will be subject to democratic oversight, ecological limits, and the foundational requirement that its use serves life.

…

For the first time, humanity is creating an instrument so powerful that its safe use may be impossible without transforming the culture of the civilization that created it. This may be AI's greatest gift. It confronts us with a choice we can no longer postpone. Cooperate to secure the wellbeing of the whole or continue competing toward our common destruction.

The question is whether we will recognize the choice and act in time.

SOURCE: https://www.other-news.info/can-ais-threat-awaken-humanity-in-time/

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