

# The International Environment Forum



**Applying Scientific Knowledge and Spiritual Values in Addressing the  
Environmental Crisis**

**International Environment Forum**

**[ief@iefworld.org](mailto:ief@iefworld.org)**

# The International Environment Forum

The IEF was launched in October 1997.

Today, there are about 700 members and associates in 92 countries on all 5 continents.



# The International Environment Forum

The IEF is a Bahá'í-inspired professional organization.

It is open to people of all religious beliefs as well as to scientists interested in applying ethical principles to environmental issues.

It encourages dialogue and learning about the complex human and natural systems that is life on this planet.

It promotes both scientific knowledge and spiritual/ethical teachings which we both need to properly address the environmental crisis.

<https://iefworld.org/>

## Example: Climate Change

Since the Industrial Revolution, the Earth has warmed about **1.3°C**.

At the Paris Climate Conference in 2015, the nations of the world committed to keeping global warming well below **2°C**.

Representatives of Small Island States then pleaded for **1.5°C** because anything above that would mean the loss of their islands.

# Example: Climate Change

- The science is clear: **A 1.5°C warming is not safe.**
- Keeping the warming below 1.5°C has become extremely difficult. It is no longer realistic that we can limit the warming to 1.5°.
- Thanks to the Paris Agreement, **most countries developed plans to reduce their carbon emissions.** These are called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). **If these goals are fully implemented, temperature rise would likely be limited to 2.6°C.** However, their implementation is voluntary, and most countries are far from accomplishing their goals of reducing emissions.
- **The current trajectory is a temperature rise of 3.1°C** by the end of the century if existing policies are fully implemented.

# Example: Climate Change

- At the present time, we have been experiencing the impacts of a global warming of **1.3°C**.

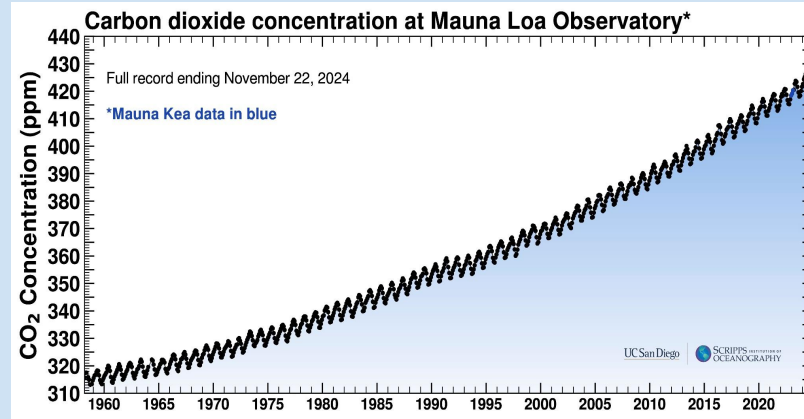


Heat waves are getting worse, storms are getting stronger, droughts and flooding are becoming more extreme, wildfires are becoming more devastating, and many people have already been forced to move away from their homes either because the climate does not support their agriculture anymore, or because of sea-level rise and extreme weather events.

# Example: Climate Change

- Each little bit of warming makes a huge difference. The impacts on the climate system don't just increase linearly.
- It is impossible to imagine a **3.1°C** warmer world, or even a 2.6°C warmer world!
- These are projections for the end of the century. Of course, the warming will continue afterward.
- There is the real danger of natural feedback loops that will reinforce the warming and which may likely be unstoppable.

# Example: Climate Change



Despite the overwhelming evidence of the existential threat of climate change, despite the voluntary plans by countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and despite widespread efforts toward energy efficiency and cleaner energy, carbon concentration in the atmosphere have continued to rise.



# The big question



Why do humans not do everything in their power to limit global warming?

Why do politicians not act? And why is there not sufficient support from the public to push for decisive climate action?

# Paralysis of will on all levels

- Countries put their own economic interests before the well-being of all of humanity.
- Big corporations and businesses put their short-term economic interest before the wellbeing of people and planet, and even of their own long-term economic interest.
- In the “developed” world, most people don’t want to give up their wasteful lifestyles.
- In “developing” countries, people feel they have the right to strive for the same standard of living as in developed countries.

**In addition, there is widespread ignorance and disinformation about the nature and scope of climate change.**

# Paralysis of will on all levels



All this results in unwillingness to take strong action to reduce carbon pollution.

Developed countries don't want to take responsibility for their historical carbon emissions and don't want to contribute their fair share to climate financing.

# The next question



How can these mental barriers of egotism and selfish economic interest be overcome?

# **We need a fundamental shift in consciousness**

*“The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole.*

*“Humanity’s collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected.”*

(Universal House of Justice, 1 March 2017 – To the Bahá’ís of the World)

# Prerequisites for meaningful climate action

- Embracing the oneness of humankind and abandoning nationalism, working toward a just global governance that includes environmental governance
- Recognizing human interconnectedness with and dependence on the natural world
- Readiness of people to be satisfied with less material things, to abandon consumerism, and find happiness in spiritual, social, and cultural activities.

**This requires spiritual development which means focusing on the well-being of the community and not on the self.**

*“Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self.”*

[Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh XLIII](#)

*“True peace and tranquillity will only be realized when every soul will have become the well-wisher of all mankind.”*

Bahá'u'lláh, [The Tabernacle of Unity](#)

# Relevance of such a world-embracing vision for political leaders

*O ye the elected representatives of the people in every land! Take ye counsel together, and let your concern be only for that which profiteth mankind and bettereth the condition thereof, ....*

Baha'u'llah, [www.bahai.org/r/976107811](http://www.bahai.org/r/976107811)

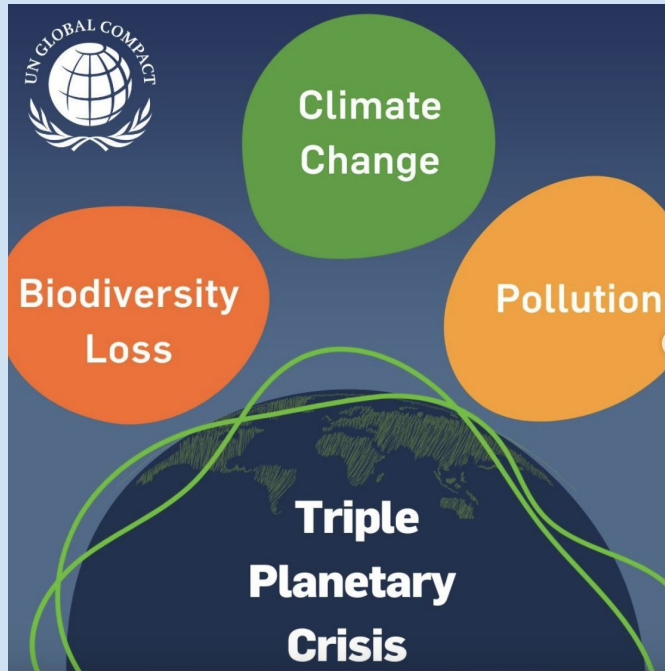
*It behoveth them, however, to be trustworthy among His servants, and to regard themselves as the representatives of all that dwell on earth.*

Baha'u'llah, [www.bahai.org/r/513426064](http://www.bahai.org/r/513426064)



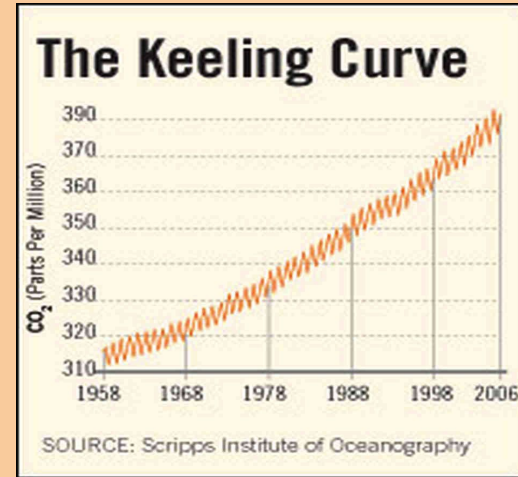
We are facing a **Triple Planetary Crisis**, climate change, loss of wild plants and animals, and pollution of all kinds (plastics, chemicals etc).

These environmental problems are intricately interconnected with **humanity's social problems** such as inequality - the immense wealth of a few and widespread poverty of many.



Therefore we need a **holistic approach** to address these problems. And **ethical principles** are essential for the fundamental social change we need for humankind to live in harmony with nature and with itself.

# Ethics and Knowledge Science and Religion



Of course, spiritual and ethical principle need to be applied to the reality of our world. Therefore, knowledge of environmental issues and about the interconnectedness of life is equally important.

# Importance of Knowledge and Education

Even well-intentioned people can act in a way that is harmful to the planet and other people if they lack the knowledge of the consequences of their actions:

*... religious conviction does not automatically translate into service to the common good. It is entirely possible, for example, to have a congregation of well-intentioned adherents whose actions do little to contribute to the betterment of society. Clearly there is much to learn about how noble ideals become expressed in committed, sustained action.*

Baha'i International Community, Shared Vision – Shared Volition: Choosing Our Global  
Future Together

**Therefore, the IEF promotes both knowledge and ethical principles, science and religion.**

# The International Environment Forum

Two focus areas:

A) **Contributing to public discourse** on issues and concepts relevant to the environment and sustainability in the global political space and in the science-religion dialogue.

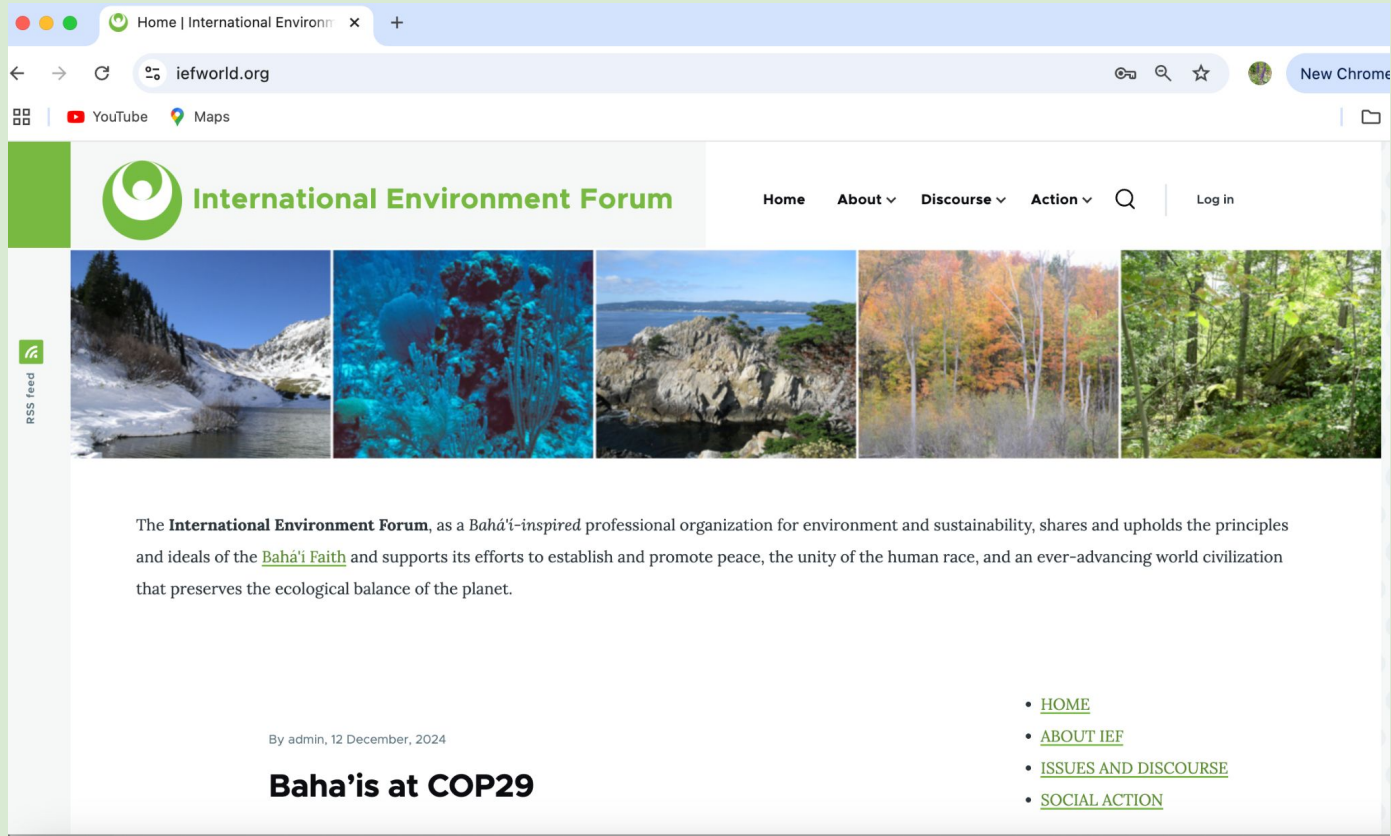
B) **Empowering its members and associates to engage in discourse and social and environmental action** by generating knowledge and providing information and resources.



# What does the IEF do?

- Website
- Monthly newsletter
- Annual Conference
- Collaborates with and supports like-minded organizations
- Writes statements on relevant topics for public discourse
- Webinars
- Youth team

**The IEF Website** contains a wealth of resources. Think of it as being a large library with several thematic floors and different rooms on each floor.




The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the homepage of the International Environment Forum (IEF). The browser's address bar shows the URL [iefworld.org](http://iefworld.org). The website's header features the IEF logo, the name "International Environment Forum", and a navigation menu with links for "Home", "About", "Discourse", "Action", and "Log in". Below the header is a horizontal banner with five nature-themed images: a snowy mountain landscape, coral reefs, a rocky coastline, autumn trees, and a lush green forest. On the left side of the page, there is a vertical "RSS feed" icon. The main content area contains a paragraph of text about the organization's mission, followed by a date "By admin, 12 December, 2024" and a large heading "Baha'is at COP29". A sidebar on the right contains a list of links: "HOME", "ABOUT IEF", "ISSUES AND DISCOURSE", and "SOCIAL ACTION".


Home | International Environm x +

← → ↻ [iefworld.org](http://iefworld.org) 🔍 ☆ 🌐 New Chrome

📺 YouTube 📍 Maps

 **International Environment Forum** Home About ▾ Discourse ▾ Action ▾ 🔍 | Log in

RSS feed



The **International Environment Forum**, as a *Bahá'í*-inspired professional organization for environment and sustainability, shares and upholds the principles and ideals of the [Bahá'í Faith](#) and supports its efforts to establish and promote peace, the unity of the human race, and an ever-advancing world civilization that preserves the ecological balance of the planet.

By admin, 12 December, 2024

## Baha'is at COP29

- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT IEF](#)
- [ISSUES AND DISCOURSE](#)
- [SOCIAL ACTION](#)

# Issues and Discourse

[ISSUES](#) - [RESOURCES](#) - [BIC STATEMENTS](#) - [COMPILATIONS](#)  
[UNITED NATIONS](#) - [SCIENCE](#) - [PAPERS](#)

## ISSUES AND DISCOURSE

The International Environment Forum's purpose is to work for the betterment of the world, living together in concord and in harmony with our planetary environment.

We aim to build a society that consciously pursues this collective purpose, working with all who labour in this undertaking, raising up vibrant communities learning how to bring about spiritual and material progress within their society and environment and to contribute to the discourses that influence the direction of that progress. We aim to build upon the most foundational qualities in humanity, ones for which the world stands in great need: unity, trustworthiness, mutual support, collaboration, fellow feeling, selflessness, commitment to truth, a sense of responsibility, a thirst to learn, the love of an all-embracing heart.

- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT IEF](#)
- [ISSUES AND DISCOURSE](#)
- [SOCIAL ACTION](#)

[New to IEF?](#)

User login

Username \*

Password \*

Log in

- [Create new account](#)
- [Reset your password](#)

When you click on any of these links, you will find big “book shelves” on each of these topics which means a long list of links.

When you click on **RESOURCES**, you will see this page. The list of resources continues when you scroll down the page.

**RESOURCES**  
**ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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[STATEMENTS OF THE BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY](#)



[STATEMENTS OF OTHER BAHÁ'Í INSTITUTIONS](#)



[BAHÁ'Í COMPILATIONS & QUOTATIONS](#)



[COMPILATIONS AND DECLARATIONS FROM OTHER FAITHS](#)



[BAHA'I FAITH AND ENVIRONMENT](#)



[PAPERS ON ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT](#)

(html listing by author, title, subject, event)



[IEF STATEMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS](#)



[VIDEOS](#)



[E-LEARNING CENTRE](#)





# E- Learning Centre

Since building human capacity is so essential, the IEF both develops its own [Learning](#) materials and shares those prepared by others. Therefore, you will find study materials for adults and youth. This includes a course on Sustainable Development and another one on Climate Change. These courses work for study groups and for self-study.

There is also a youth page and a developing children's page.

On other pages, you can find interfaith resources and information about international conferences on the environment such as on climate change or biological diversity, and reports about Baha'i activities at such conferences.

## [IEF Approach to Social Action](#)

### [Course Materials](#)

Courses and training materials for local use or adaptation

### [Materials for children](#)

Educational materials and activities on nature and the environment

### [Group Exercises on Sustainable Development and Spirituality](#)

Activities to create interest and motivation for local groups and communities

### [Devotional Programmes](#)

Devotional materials on themes of environment and sustainability

### [Case studies](#)

Practical activities that are bringing more sustainability

### [Things you can do](#)

Practical suggestions for changing your lifestyle



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM  
Volume 26, Number 11 --- 15 November 2024

Website

[www.iefworld.org](http://www.iefworld.org)

Article Deadline 10 Dec. 2024

Article submission

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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](mailto: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

The IEF also produces a **monthly e-newsletter** which reports about IEF activities, and reflects on environmental actions and discourse from a Baha'i perspective, and shares news about environmental science and interfaith activities.

# IEF Annual Conferences

One of the major activities of the IEF is its annual conferences, which are often held in partnership with other organizations and events. The conferences may rotate between continents to give more members a chance to participate; more recently they were held virtually.



IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
**STOCKHOLM +** 

**26 Annual Conference  
of the  
International Environment  
Forum  
1-5 June 2022**

**A healthy planet for the prosperity of all –  
our responsibility, our opportunity**



**IEF 27TH ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**

Implementing Solidarity- Global to Local

16 - 22 September, 2023

  Bahá'í  
International  
Community 

**28th IEF Conference** took place virtually alongside the United Nations Summit of the Future in **September 2024**.

Its topic was *A World-embracing Vision for a Sustainable Future*.

It aimed to contribute Baha'i-inspired perspectives to the discourse of the Summit of the Future.

## INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

### 28th Annual Conference

A World-Embracing Vision for a Sustainable Future  
Alongside the UN Summit of the Future  
**SEPTEMBER 14 - 28, 2024**

14 September  
1 PM EDT / 7 PM CEST

Interactive event: A Vision for a Sustainable Future - A Conversation with Youth

17 September  
11:30AM EDT / 5:30PM CEST

Panel: Developing a Vision for Global Collaboration

22 September  
1 PM EDT / 7 PM CEST

Panel: Building Futures in Communities

28 September  
1 PM EDT / 7 PM CEST

Panel: Where do we go from here? - Deeds not Words



U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs

Learn More and Register at:  
<https://iefworld.org/conf28>

# Conference 2024 panel on *Developing a Vision for Global Collaboration*

For example, one event was *Developing a Vision for Global Collaboration*. It revolved around transforming global governance, which was relevant for the Summit of the Future where a reform of the United Nations was discussed.



# Conference 2024 panel on *Building Futures in Communities*

Panelists reported on various local projects aimed at enhancing environmental sustainability and human well-being including a reforestation project in Iceland, community gardening in Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, agricultural and environmental education in Colombia, and relief work following recent flooding in Brazil. They offered real-life experiences and insights related to Baha'i-inspired approaches for social action in environmental areas. While this event contributed to public discourse, it also served to share ideas and knowledge, and to inspire IEF – members and anyone who participated for similar actions.



# **IEF contributes to public discourse**

## **United Nations forums and conferences**

The IEF was accredited to the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002) as a scientific and technological organization, and again to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20 in Rio de Janeiro, 2012), the 2022 Stockholm+50 International Meeting, and other relevant UN events.

# IEF Webinars

Thanks to the personal initiative of IEF member Khela Baskett, the IEF has presented online webinars on topics of current interest since late 2020. Many of these webinars were recorded and are available on the IEF YouTube page.

All the recordings of the recent conference events are also accessible on the IEF website.

## IEF WEBINAR SERIES

The IEF is presenting a monthly online webinar series on topics of current interest. As a Bahá'í-inspired professional organisation, the IEF works for responsible environmental management and sustainability through both science and values, demonstrating the complementarity of science and religion. It is open to all viewpoints and all faith traditions to encourage dialogue and increase understanding of the complex human and natural system that is life on this planet. IEF webinars are organised in this spirit.

When there is a presentation that is recorded rather than a discussion, the resulting **recording** is available here:

**Playlist of IEF Webinars:** <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnjZMm5SfeQg-bukPSrxQJzW9IGfrhLhgh>

For the **IEF YouTube channel** with all playlists, go here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@internationalenvironmentfo798>





The IEF Youth Team holds informal gatherings, often for study purposes. It welcomes more young people.



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM  
**YOUTH  
GATHERING**

ON:  
**24 MARCH**

ONLINE VIA:  
[https://stockholmuniversity.  
zoom.us/j/3850681884](https://stockholmuniversity.zoom.us/j/3850681884)

TIME:  
19:00 CET/ 2:00 PM EST

The poster features a sunset over the ocean at the top. The text is centered on a light orange background. At the bottom right, there is a photograph of a green plant branch with small leaves.



INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM  
**YOUTH  
GATHERING**

ON:  
**16 JUNE**

ONLINE VIA:  
[tinyurl.com/ief-youth](http://tinyurl.com/ief-youth)

TIME:  
20:00 CET/ 2:00 PM EST

The poster features a dense forest scene at the top. The text is centered on a light blue background. At the bottom right, there is a photograph of a green plant branch with small white flowers.

# Collaboration with other organizations and institutions

The IEF collaborates with like-minded organizations such as ebbf – Ethical Business Building the Future and the Baha'i International Community.

The logo for ebbf (Ethical Business Building the Future) consists of the lowercase letters 'ebbf' in a bold, rounded, teal-colored sans-serif font.

Bahá'í  
International  
Community



# Organization

- **Virtual organization**
- Operates according to **statutes** that define its purpose and organization
- Applies **Bahá'í principles of administration.**
- A **Governing Board** is elected each year by the world-wide membership without nominations or campaigning by e-voting and during the General Assembly.
- The Board meets four to five times per year. As Board members live in different countries, all meetings are virtual.



# IEF Board Meeting December 17, 2024

This is a screenshot of a meeting to make this presentation more personal.



# IEF General Assembly

- The annual **IEF General Assembly** is an opportunity for the membership to review the activities of the past year, to consult on future activities and make recommendations to the Governing Board.
- The IEF operates **without a fund**. It is entirely volunteer run. **Membership is free** and therefore accessible for anyone who is interested in and agrees with the IEF's Baha'i-inspired approach and statutes.



# How to use the services of the IEF and how to support it?

- You can just **use the resources** on the IEF website which are available to everyone: <https://iefworld.org/>
- You can subscribe to the **IEF monthly e-newsletter**.
- You can become a **member or an associate**.  
Associates have the same privileges as members – they receive the newsletter and any other communications, but they don't participate in the election of the IEF Board.

# The IEF thrives on volunteer work

The IEF is grateful for all its volunteers around the world. Volunteers are always welcome in all the dimensions of IEF's work, for example:

- Technical aspects of website management
- The newsletter team welcomes good writers and is looking for a coordinator.
- The conference team is wonderful and invites more team players.

# The IEF thrives on volunteer work

- Volunteering for the IEF is both a great service and an opportunity to build capacity and learn new things.
- Increasing opportunities for the IEF to get involved. Our limits are defined by our human resources.
- It is especially important for younger IEF members to learn how IEF functions and to become active collaborators to assure that the IEF will thrive in the future.



**Thank you for your interest in the International  
Environment Forum!**



<https://iefworld.org/>

IEF Secretariat: [ief@iefworld.org](mailto:ief@iefworld.org)