



LEAVES, A Newsletter of the INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM Volume 25, Number 11 --- 15 November 2023

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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.

Members Corner

IEF 27th General Assembly and Board Election Report 21 October 2023

The 27th General Assembly of the International Environment Forum was held over the Internet on the Zoom platform on 21 October 2023. The meeting was held twice to accommodate members and associates from different time zones.

Altogether, there were 28 participants from 18 countries. You can read the names of the participants, where they were from, and some key points from the consultation in the [General Assembly 27 Report](#).

The following IEF members were elected to the Governing Board for the coming year: Arthur Dahl (Switzerland), Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (Netherlands), Christine Muller (USA), Laurent Mesbah (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Victoria Thoresen (Norway), Wendi Momen (UK), and Halldór Thorgeirsson (Iceland).

Share your knowledge, expertise, and interests!

Local communities all over the world are being faced with increasing environmental destruction and other developmental challenges. They want to take action in many different ways, but they may not always have access to the knowledge they need. There is much knowledge in the IEF community that could be of service to others!

That's why, during the past year, Mike Semple, in collaboration with the IEF board, spent much time redesigning the IEF user accounts. Now, you have more options to indicate your knowledge,

expertise, and experience. Please, update your information in the IEF data base if you have not done so yet in the past three months. Just login to access your user account. If you have any trouble with logging in, contact the Secretariat at ief@iefworld.org

IEF WEBINARS

By IEF webinar coordinator Khela Basket

21st IEF Webinar

Saturday, 2 December 2023

10am PDT California
1pm EST New York
6pm GMT
7pm CET Central Europe

The Concept of Liberty in the Baha'i Teachings and its Application for Environmental Sustainability

Speaker: Christine Muller

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/FreedomEnvironment>

Description

The teachings of Baha'u'llah about liberty/freedom are fundamentally important for our spiritual development and for the enormous social and environmental problems of our time. The presentation is an attempt to shed light on the meaning of true freedom in the Baha'i Writings and on their relevance, not only for individuals' spiritual growth and creativity, but for the survival of human civilization on a planet with finite resources. The Baha'i concept of liberty, which calls for moderation and justice, leads away from materialism, consumerism, and exploitation toward social justice and environmental sustainability.

22nd IEF Webinar

Saturday 6 January, 2024, 1pm EDT, 7pm CET

Reflections on COP28 and Ideas for Moving Forward

Speakers: Halldór Thorgeirsson, Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Rosie Poirier, Arthur Dahl

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/IEF-COP28>

You will find more information about this webinar in the next issue of LEAVES.

CONCEPT PAPER "Environment as an Area of Social Action"

The IEF Board has worked over several months on a conceptual paper on Environment as an Area of Social Action. Its purpose is to serve as a tool for Baha'i-inspired social action in the area of the environment, by connecting environmental action with spiritual teachings as well as by providing some initial practical considerations. You can [access it here](#) to read and share it with your friends.

*A class at Ruhi Arbab School, a Bahá'í-inspired school in Jamundi-Robles, Colombia
Copyright © Bahá'í International Community*



The Climate Governance Commission – Governing Our Planetary Emergency

Governing Our Planetary Emergency is the title of the **2023 Report of the Climate Governance Commission**.

The Climate Governance Commission (CGC) aims to address a crucial gap in confronting the global climate emergency by developing, proposing, and building partnerships that promote feasible, high-impact global governance solutions for urgent and effective climate action to limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C or less.

You are invited to join the CGC for their global online launch of the 2023 Report.

November 28, 2023

9:00 - 10:30 AM EDT

15:00 – 16:30 CET

Go [here](#) to register.

Featured speakers:

Maria Fernanda Espinosa, Co-Chair of the Climate Governance Commission and Executive Director of Global Women Leaders Voices, President of the 73rd UN General Assembly

Johan Rockström, Scientific Co-Chair of the Climate Governance Commission and Director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

Mary Robinson, Lead Co-Chair of the Climate Governance Commission and Chair of the Elders, Former President of Ireland

Moderator:

Maja Groff, Convenor, Climate Governance Commission

Source: The Stimson Centre <https://www.stimson.org/event/the-climate-governance-commission-governing-our-planetary-emergency/>



Call for Submissions: Climate Change Art at COP28 Announcement by the Baha'i International Community

Every year, the international community gathers at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Conference of the Parties (COP) to discuss climate action and negotiate countries' commitments to addressing the climate crisis. In doing so, world leaders, government officials, and members of civil society come together to work to create a better future for all.

The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and the Baha'i International Community are organizing an exhibition of digital art at COP28 from December 4 - 6, responding to the question: "what is the future you wish to live in?" in an effort to showcase visions of what ambitious climate action to protect our planet can materialize into, and share the aspirations of many for a more sustainable future.

People of all ages and backgrounds are invited to create visual interventions (drawings, paintings, video art, sculptures) that reflect on the framing question of "what is the future you wish to live in?", to

be displayed on digital screens in the exhibition.

Deadline for submissions is December 1st 11:59 pm EST, and selected artists will be informed via email by December 4th 2:00 am EST, with their images being displayed in COP28 at Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and Baha'i International Community's exhibition from December 4 - 6, 2023.

Submission form: <https://forms.gle/zb1oJJJ7gYZigHsi7>

If you'd like to create visuals for the exhibition but don't know what to draw, here are some ideas: reforestation, renewable energy, biodiversity, sustainable living, green cities, coexist peacefully.

If you have any questions, please write to: steve_chiu@tzuchi.us

Agriculture Working Group of the Association for Bahá'í Studies Webinar

Sunday, November 26 at 1:00pm EST, 7pm CET

Sustainable Crop Production While Protecting the Environment

Speaker: Neil Whatley

Neil Whatley will be presenting notes from the field about the steps farmers are taking to protect the environment while earning a living growing marketable crops. As part of the Climate and Environment Working Group Seminar at the ABS Conference in Atlanta this past summer Neil gave a comprehensive view of food security and environmental challenges. This presentation will focus more directly on agriculture and environmental issues.

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/>

The 2023 state of the climate report: Entering uncharted territory

William J. Ripple et al.

The Alliance of World Scientists that issues Scientists' Warnings has just published its 2023 state of the climate report. The following is a summary of the conclusions of the report. You should refer to the [full report](#) for more details, references and telling graphics.

The effects of global warming are progressively more severe, and possibilities such as a worldwide societal breakdown are feasible and dangerously underexplored. By the end of this century, an estimated 3 to 6 billion individuals—approximately one-third to one-half of the global population—might find themselves confined beyond the livable region, encountering severe heat, limited food availability, and elevated mortality rates because of the effects of climate change. Big problems need big solutions. Therefore, we must shift our perspective on the climate emergency from being just an isolated environmental issue to a systemic, existential threat. Although global heating is devastating, it represents only one aspect of the escalating and interconnected environmental crisis that we are facing (e.g., biodiversity loss, freshwater scarcity, pandemics). We need policies that target the underlying issues of ecological overshoot where the human demand on Earth's resources results in overexploitation of our planet and biodiversity decline. As long as humanity continues to exert extreme pressure on the Earth, any attempted climate-only solutions will only redistribute this pressure.

The overexploitation of our planet shows that endless growth and overconsumption by rich countries

and individuals is unsustainable and unjust. We advocate for reducing resource overconsumption; reducing, reusing, and recycling waste in a more circular economy; and prioritizing human flourishing and sustainability. We emphasize climate justice and fair distribution of the costs and benefits of climate action, particularly for vulnerable communities. We call for a transformation of the global economy to prioritize human well-being and to provide for a more equitable distribution of resources. We also call to stabilize and gradually decrease the human population with gender justice through voluntary family planning and by supporting women's and girls' education and rights, which reduces fertility rates and raises the standard of living. These environmentally conscious and socially equitable strategies necessitate far-reaching and holistic transformations in the long run that could be achieved through gradual but significant steps in the short term.

As scientists, we are increasingly being asked to tell the public the truth about the crises we face in simple and direct terms. The truth is that we are shocked by the ferocity of the extreme weather events in 2023. We are afraid of the uncharted territory that we have now entered. Conditions are going to get very distressing and potentially unmanageable for large regions of the world, with the 2.6°C warming expected over the course of the century, even if the self-proposed national emissions reduction commitments of the Paris Agreement are met. We warn of potential collapse of natural and socioeconomic systems in such a world where we will face unbearable heat, frequent extreme weather events, food and fresh water shortages, rising seas, more emerging diseases, and increased social unrest and geopolitical conflict. Massive suffering due to climate change is already here, and we have now exceeded many safe and just Earth system boundaries, imperiling stability and life-support systems. As we will soon bear witness to failing to meet the Paris agreement's aspirational 1.5°C goal, the significance of immediately curbing fossil fuel use and preventing every further 0.1°C increase in future global heating cannot be overstated. Rather than focusing only on carbon reduction and climate change, addressing the underlying issue of ecological overshoot will give us our best shot at surviving these challenges in the long run. This is our moment to make a profound difference for all life on Earth, and we must embrace it with unwavering courage and determination to create a legacy of change that will stand the test of time.

SOURCE: based on <https://academic.oup.com/bioscience/advance-article/doi/10.1093/biosci/...>



Africa 'big challenge' in climate migration crisis

World Meteorological Organization

When it comes to the increasingly critical phenomenon of climate migration, Africa represents a “big challenge” for the world, according to Petteri Taalas, secretary-general of the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

“The big challenge is what’s going to happen in Africa. The climatic conditions, especially in the northern part of Africa and the southern part of Africa, are going to be more difficult. So, Africa is clearly an area where this refugee potential is growing. You already see it now.”

There are already so many people making perilous journeys to reach European countries, he said, warning that “the risk in the future is clearly much bigger.”

For Africa, he said the continent’s burgeoning population will be another key factor in climate migration over the coming years.

“There’s a chance that we would see even up to 4 billion inhabitants in Africa by the end of the century, besides the current 1 billion,” he said.

On the World Bank’s assessment on climate migration figures, the WMO chief said it is difficult to come up with exact numbers.

A 2018 World Bank report on climate migration projected that without urgent national and global climate action, countries in South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America could see more than 140 million people move within their borders by 2050.

“But it’s clear that the potential is growing every year because of population growth and also the negative impacts of climate change,” Taalas said.

No way back to last century’s climate

Taalas reiterated that the world is heading toward a “more difficult climate,” but stressed the need to avoid unwanted doomsday projections.

“We are not going to see the end of the world because of climate change, but if we are not able to limit our consumption of fossil fuels, then we will see a fairly dark future,” he said.

“In many parts of the world, living conditions, and also the economic conditions, will be more difficult than today.”

Given the dangerous extent of carbon emissions in the atmosphere, the world will keep feeling the negative impacts for “even thousands of years,” he said.

“There’s no return back to last century’s climate anymore,” he added.

Heat will keep claiming lives in Europe

Taalas said he does not expect a decline in heat-related deaths in Europe, saying last summer’s heat wave and its route were very similar to the situation a year ago.

According to him, heat waves claimed 75,000 lives in Europe in 2003, 55,000 in 2010 and more than 60,000 last summer.

On the international community’s climate action obligations, he particularly called on members of the BRICS bloc to meet the targets laid out in the Paris Agreement.

BRICS currently comprises of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, but it has recently invited six countries – Argentina, Egypt, Iran, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and the UAE – to join the bloc.

Taalas said greenhouse gas emissions are increasing in China and India, but declining in the US, Japan, Singapore and many European countries.

There is also good news from Africa in this regard, where some countries have brought down their emissions, he said.

“For example, in Kenya, 93% of energy is produced from renewable energy, mostly using solar, wind and hydroelectricity,” he added.



SOURCE: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/africa-big-challenge-in-climate-migration-crisis-un-weather-agency-chief/3003926>

Responding to the Climate Crisis in Times of Uncertainty: A Clarion Call for Climate Leadership

Webinar by the World Resources Institute

The webinar offered by the World Resources Institute on 9 November is worth sharing. A [recording of the event](#) is available in English, Spanish and French.

Background

The Global Stocktake at COP28 will evaluate how much progress has been made in the fight against the climate crisis and what more is needed to accelerate climate action forward. But global climate efforts are currently way off track, and no one is at more risk than the vulnerable communities in the Global South who are facing a mounting debt crisis and have few resources to respond to escalating climate impacts. Without immediate leadership to drive deep emissions cuts and scale-up finance to respond to these impacts, more people will be pushed into extreme inequality and poverty.

What climate-vulnerable countries need at the COP28 climate summit in the UAE is a major course correction driven by a political response that will rapidly decarbonize all sectors, promote adaptation, scale up climate finance and increase resources to address loss and damage.

Summary

During the high-level webinar, speakers underscored the critical need to renew our global commitment to the Paris Agreement at the upcoming COP28 summit in Dubai. They urged countries to address fossil fuels as the root of the climate crisis, to build momentum around the 100 billion climate finance goal as we approach the new global finance goal next year, and called on developed nations to rapidly scale up their support, and emphasized that supporting those on the frontlines of the climate crisis is not an option – it's an absolute necessity to tackle the climate crisis. They reiterated their faith in multilateralism, especially in these uncertain times.

The event also included an overview of the [ACT2025 Call to Action for COP28](#) which sets clear expectations for a positive outcome at COP28 that meets the needs of climate-vulnerable countries. You can also read the WRI [Insights article](#) for the key highlights.

Source: Email from the World Resources Institute and <https://www.wri.org/events/2023/11/responding-climate-crisis-times-uncertainty-clarion-call-climate-leadership>

'Hidden handbrakes' blocking action to halt climate change

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has exposed the 'hidden handbrakes' blocking action to halt climate change. In an event on 22 September, the IIED showed that action to halt or reduce further climate change is being blocked by a range of 'hidden handbrakes' that the public are broadly unaware of and which range from legal obstacles to subsidies for fossil fuel companies and the architecture of the global financial system.

Current plans by nations to cut their carbon emissions put the world on track for 2.7°C of warming this century, far in excess of the 1.5°C limit agreed to at negotiations in Paris in 2015. The countries' most vulnerable to climate change are already suffering, causing irreversible losses and damage.

The spotlight falls each year on the UN-run climate negotiations and countries' pledges to reduce their carbon emissions and adapt to a changing climate. But outside of this process, many other factors are limiting the world's ability to respond to the climate crisis.

They include investor state dispute settlements (ISDS), backed by international treaties and free trade mechanisms, which hand billions of dollars to fossil fuel investors in cases where positive climate action by governments is damaging fossil fuel asset values. As well as the issue of vast subsidies that exist for industries that damage the climate, including agriculture, animal feed supplies, and the manufacture of steel, cement and concrete.

Then there are many countries with debt repayments that far outweigh the money spent on positive climate action. While public debt swaps are increasing, sovereign debt for many low-income countries is held by China's state institutions and private investors in the global North.

Other handbrakes already identified by IIED include:

- The legal contracts or agreements that make the intended beneficiaries of climate adaptation finance liable for underperformance
- Too little international climate finance reaching the communities that need it with a huge number of intermediaries often mandated in governance structures and reinforced by complex audit, due diligence, and fiduciary risk management requirements, and
- Open competitive tenders or calls, often underpinned by procurement law and accepted practices, resulting in millions of hours of time from highly valuable climate change professionals invested each year in failed proposals.

IIED plans to build a web-based platform enabling individuals and organisations to share and exchange ideas on other 'hidden handbrakes' that they believe are slowing progress on tackling the climate and nature crises. This is intended to lead to direct action that exposes the deep code in society and economies protecting the status quo.

SOURCE: <https://www.iied.org/exposing-hidden-handbrakes-blocking-action-halt-cl...>

The Global Faith Leaders' Summit: Confluence of Conscience - Uniting Leaders for Planetary Resurgence

More than 200 Faith Leaders, Scientists, Youth, Business Leaders, Women Leaders, and Politicians, came together in Abu Dhabi 6-7 November to unite their voices and adopt a [powerful Interfaith Statement](#) highlighting the common faith values that bring them together, strongly demand world leaders and decision-makers to urgently act, and demonstrate their leadership in committing their institutions to transformative actions.

Introduction of the Interfaith Statement

In the spirit of unity, shared responsibility, and Human Fraternity, and at this pivotal moment of the global climate crisis that demands transformative action to keep 1.5 degrees within reach and serve affected and vulnerable communities, we, representatives of diverse faith and Indigenous traditions, through dialogue with scientists, religious scholars, academics, women's organizations, youth, civil society, business leaders, and environmental policymakers, convened in Abu Dhabi in the lead-up to COP28 to express our shared concern for the escalating climate impacts that imperil our cherished planet, as well as our common commitment to jointly address this global crisis, building upon our previous efforts, including the interfaith appeal for COP26. Our faith instills in us a sacred duty to cherish not only our human family but also the fragile ecosystem that cradles us.

To read the entire statement, go here: <https://iefworld.org/interfaithCOP28>

The Global Summit was co-hosted by UNEP Faith for Earth, the Muslim Council of Elders, COP 28 Presidency, and the Ministry of Tolerance and Coexistence of UAE under the Patronage of the President of UAE His Highness Sheikh Mohamed ben Zayed.

Source: Faith for Earth Newsletter 9 Nov. 2023 <https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/43930>

Creating a Strong Interface between Science, Policy and Society to Tackle Global Plastic Pollution

Policy Brief by the International Science Council

Plastic pollution has increased dramatically to reach even the most remote parts of our planet. It affects all natural environments from deep oceanic sediments to the atmosphere and agricultural soils, and threatens human health through plastic found in blood, the brain and breastmilk.

Over the past few decades, scientific studies have unveiled the mounting threats and risks posed by plastic pollution, which require immediate global action, but also a long-term and sustained scientific participation through a mechanism at the interface between science, policy and society. Current negotiations are underway to produce a legally binding instrument to combat plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The ISC has developed a new policy brief to guide the current negotiations on an international legally binding instrument to combat plastic pollution. The brief aims to advance a science-based approach ensuring the instrument is based on the latest and best scientific evidence available.

Source: [International Science Council](https://www.international-science-council.org/)

