



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 ISSUE ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The International Environment Forum is taking the 75th anniversary of the United Nations as an opportunity to contribute to the discourse on how to build the future we want. In a world of dramatic changes and complex challenges, from the climate crisis to population shifts to the unknown course of technology, we need collective action more than ever before.

The third article below covers the [United Nations' 75th anniversary](#) in 2020 and its initiative to ignite a global people's conversation on building the future we want.

The second article announces the exciting news of the publication of the new book [Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century](#) by IEF members Arthur Dahl and Maja Groff, together with Augusto Lopez-Claros. As you will see from the brief article, the proposals in the book illuminate humanity's path to global governance and it is well worth reading !

The first article right below on [Governance, Science and the Climate Crisis](#) is a major statement by the International Environment Forum which will be of vital interest to our members and other readers. There is an immediate need for a wide international debate on the role of science in governance at all levels, especially at the global level, for pressing environmental problems. The article only covers the Introduction. You can read the whole proposal [here](#).



Governance, Science and the Climate Crisis

A Proposal by the International Environment Forum

January 2020

Entire Proposal: <https://www.iefworld.org/node/1023>

Introduction

The International Environment Forum (IEF) proposes launching a campaign with others to strengthen the science-policy interface in the United Nations (UN) system with formal links to decision-making processes, with a major focus on the climate crisis, in order to overcome the inertia of present governance mechanisms. This will also mean new efforts to explain the challenges and their ethical implications and to build public support for actions, including at the local level. Since the General Assembly can create subsidiary advisory bodies without approval required by the Permanent Members of the Security Council, we can try to build sufficient momentum among interested countries, supported by adequate public pressure, to strengthened scientific advisory bodies and their role in the UN.

The main risk addressed is the failure of political processes at the national and global levels to truly listen to scientific warnings about climate catastrophe, biodiversity collapse, pollution impacts and other environmental threats. While they do pay attention to scientists and adopt global goals for transforming the world in a more sustainable direction, they continue in practice with business as usual. The science of complex systems shows that all these risks are interlinked, and could lead to a complex catastrophe with major social and economic consequences as well. The interest created in improved global governance during the UN 75th anniversary could create opportunities to push this issue as part of wider UN reform. One early aim should be to give the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) the power to identify binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions that would be required to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement and to negotiate their equitable distribution.

Given the difficulties in the UNFCCC and the number of governments that are turning away from multilateral action and even from accepting scientific realities, it will be a challenge to build support in some countries for strengthening scientific advisory mechanisms. Political will in too many countries is linked to powerful economic interests, political expediency and ideological positions that resist change, and decades of science advice have done little so far to alter this. There is also the common focus on short-term national interests in the political and diplomatic machinery of governance.

However many other countries are setting objectives and targets, parts of the private sector see responding to the climate crisis as a good business opportunity, and consumers are shifting their lifestyles and demand. Public acceptance of the changes required to respond to what science is revealing about the havoc done to natural systems is generally more widespread, especially among the young, as the calls for climate justice demonstrate. The potential is there for a widespread movement to accelerate change, both to bring the advice and knowledge of scientists more directly into global decision-making, and to work around the obstacles that some countries will certainly try to put in the way.

One need is to move from science as the source only of negative news and warnings of disaster, to a source of positive solutions and visions of the better world that can emerge from the necessary economic and social transition. This can be coupled with ethical arguments around justice, equity, solidarity and moderation in lifestyles that can also build wider support in civil society, youth movements and faith-based organizations. Given the acceleration of the climate and biodiversity catastrophes, there is no rational alternative to the ultimate adoption of these proposals if we want a dignified life for future generations on this planet.

Strengthening the role of independent scientific advice can increase the effectiveness of governance in the fundamental transformation required to move towards sustainability, and reduce the rapidly-accelerating costs of inaction. We need to develop arguments that listening to the knowledge that comes from science, and experience in the form of indigenous and local knowledge, leads to better outcomes, and build momentum for reform. Some countries are leading the way, and they will demonstrate that transformation is both possible and beneficial. Accelerating climate change impacts and the consequences of collapsing biodiversity will ultimately force governments to change their position, so making rational arguments now will facilitate this. There has already been a significant shift in public opinion in recent years, so further improvement in the next five years is certainly possible. The challenge is to channel that into institutional change at the global level, but there are also positive proposals for this that can gain momentum.

For the IEF, as a small organization operating without funding, this will be implemented through:

- Information on our web site, newsletter and outreach to our members;
- Participation in major events in partnership with others (ebbf-Ethical Business Building the Future, Together First, Global Governance Forum, Baha'i International Community, etc), including at the United Nations and COP 26;
- Contributions to our major group, the Scientific and Technological organizations, in collaboration with the International Science Council;
- Preparation and distribution of statements on social media and in video clips;
- Contribution to on-line courses on climate change and other educational activities;
- Empowering our members and others to take action in their local communities.

We can only do a small part of what is required, and welcome partnerships to extend these activities.

The above is only the introduction to the proposal which covers the following topics:

- Science and governance
- Strengthening science in policy-making
- Reforming global governance
- Scientific advisory processes
- Global governance of the environment
- Focus on the climate crisis
- Climate governance
- Building motivation
- Education for transformation
- Access to science
- Conclusions

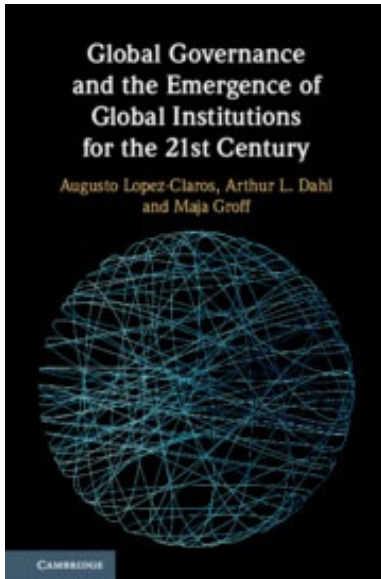
To read the entire proposal, go to <https://www.iefworld.org/node/1023>.

Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century

New book by Augusto Lopez-Claros, Arthur Dahl and Maja Groff

As the world teeters on the brink of any number of global catastrophes from climate change to the increasing temptation to use weapons of mass destruction, and where hope for world peace is receding, it is time to put global governance back at the center of international debate. IEF members Arthur Dahl and Maja Groff, together with Augusto Lopez-Claros, have done just that in their new

book *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century* published by Cambridge University Press on 23 January 2020. In over 500 pages of careful reasoning, they lay out the deficiencies in the present United Nations system and propose all the changes necessary both to correct flaws built into the UN Charter at its inception to make it acceptable to the victorious powers defending their national sovereignty, and to adapt it to the needs of a global system facing new challenges that did not exist in 1945. In this year of rethinking the role of the United Nations on its 75th anniversary, positive proposals to face and resolve global catastrophic risks are needed more than ever.



Part I of the book provides the background, reviewing the challenges of the 21st century, providing a short history of proposals for global governance and the first real steps in the League of Nations and the United Nations, and looking at the example of European integration after World War II, starting with a Coal and Steel Community and building the supranational institutions of the European Union step by step as trust was built that interstate cooperation could work.

The second part of the book presents proposals to reform the central institutions of the United Nations to give it the competencies in legislative, executive and judicial functions that are taken for granted in national governments but are still limited at the global level.

The General Assembly would be reformed with proportional representation and the power to adopt binding legislation in those areas requiring global governance, including peace and security and the global environment. It would be supported by advisory mechanisms, including scientific advice across global issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, atmospheric and oceanic pollution, and management of the global commons. Technology assessment of issues such as geoengineering, nanotechnology, gene editing, and artificial intelligence would provide the basis for global legislation prohibiting dangerous and encouraging constructive uses while applying the precautionary principle. An Office of Ethical Assessment would ensure that fundamental human and environmental rights and responsibilities are considered in any measures adopted. A Second Chamber of Civil Society would allow all the major groups and stakeholders to propose and comment on the necessary actions to protect the common global interests of humanity and the planet. One immediate step that could catalyze progress in this direction would be the creation of a World Parliamentary Assembly already under discussion.

At the executive level, the disfunctional Security Council would be replaced by a UN Executive Council chaired by the Secretary-General, with all governments having a voice and none a veto. It would oversee the effective management of the UN System, with subsidiary bodies for disarmament, mediation and conciliation, and an International Peace Force able to implement decisions for collective security to ensure world peace. The transition to collective security would require carefully staged and balanced reductions in national armaments as the international force becomes operational, while the human and material resources presently devoted to unproductive military expenditures would be redirected to constructive uses. An independent UN funding mechanism would ensure adequate resources to carry out the necessary functions of global governance.

The International Court of Justice would be given binding jurisdiction to interpret global law and adjudicate international disputes. It would be supported by the International Criminal Court, an Anti-corruption Court and an International Human Rights Tribunal, as well as an Office of the UN Attorney-General and an International Judicial Training Institute. A UN Bill of Rights would define both individual and national rights and responsibilities.

To give global governance the capacity to manage the multiple global risks that threaten our future, the UN Specialized Agencies would be enhanced and completed with agencies for global economic management and regulation of the private sector, and to reduce inequalities within and between countries. The global financial architecture would be reinforced and the International Monetary Fund

given the capacity to address threats of financial collapse. Responding to global environmental crises requires that the many environmental conventions should be consolidated under global legislation for effective management of climate change, biodiversity, chemicals, plastics, and the equitable distribution of natural resources. Global management is also needed to deal with population imbalances and the inevitable mass displacement of populations being triggered by the climate crisis and sea level rise.

The book gives particular attention to cross-cutting issues such as corruption, the destroyer of prosperity that has now reached a scale requiring international enforcement. Major attention also needs to be directed to education for transformation, so that all lesser loyalties are subordinated to a sense of global citizenship as members of one human race.

The last part of the book explores the values and principles necessary to underlie an enhanced international system, so that global good governance can be operationalized. This is required both to build public support and participation in governance at all levels, and to ensure that all those working within the international system and contributing to its processes believe in its values and are there to be of service to all of humanity.

The big question, of course, is how to get from here to there. The book discusses some immediate steps forward, and explores scenarios of alternative future paths. Since previous steps towards global governance were the result of the terrible suffering of World Wars I and II, it is possible that another crisis will be necessary to push governments to act finally in their own common interest. Launching the debate now on bridging the governance gap at the global level, by showing that UN reform is not impossible and that there are practical ways forward, should prepare the way for rapid action once the inertia of the present system is overcome.

While there will obviously be opposition to these proposals, particularly by vested interests in the present system and the contrary forces rejecting multilateralism, there is no real alternative in a globalized world to achieving effective global governance. The longer we resist, the more painful will be the transition. In today's globalized world, national sovereignty has been eroded to almost nothing. For more than a century, the world has ignored calls to acknowledge that the Earth is one country and all humanity its citizens. Now the planet itself, through the climate catastrophe and biodiversity collapse, is sending us signals that we ignore at our peril. Everyone everywhere needs to take this message to heart. All of our governments need to be pressured to acknowledge that their national autonomy can only be guaranteed by an effective global government. The more governments come on board to support these proposals or others like them, the sooner can the process of building global governance for the 21st century get under way.

The book *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 515 pages, can already be pre-ordered from Cambridge University Press and as an e-book on Amazon, and will be available on line in open access from 23 January 2020.

Link to [Order from Cambridge](#)

Link to [E-book from Amazon](#)

UN75 Launched

To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations is igniting a people's debate, UN75. Launched by UN Secretary-General António Guterres on 2 January 2020, it promises to be the largest and furthest-reaching global conversation ever on building the future we want.



In a world of dramatic changes and complex challenges, from the climate crisis to population shifts to the unknown course of technology, we need collective action more than ever before. Through UN75, the

United Nations will encourage people to put their heads together to define how enhanced international cooperation can help realize a better world by 2045, the UN's 100th birthday.

At this pivotal moment in history, UN75 asks three big questions:

- What kind of future do we want to create?
- Are we on track?
- What action is needed to bridge the gap?

Anyone can join the conversation. Online and offline, in formal and informal dialogues, UN75 will involve as many people as possible, ideally in all 193 UN Member States. Together, they will share their hopes and fears, assess current and future risks and opportunities, and source solutions for global cooperation.

Parallel global opinion polling and media analysis will provide statistically representative data. Consolidated views and ideas will be presented to world leaders and widely disseminated.

For the United Nations, UN75 will be a year of listening and learning. UN organizations, country teams and key stakeholders will have pivotal roles in taking three actions:

- Connect people; bring together diverse groups, especially those not often heard, to shape a new global dialogue.
- Amplify their voices: open channels for people to talk and be heard!
- Inspire action: provide feedback, and share and advocate solutions.

Timeline:

- Official Launch 2 January 2020
- UN Charter Day 26 June 2020
- UNGA 2020 21 September 2020
- UN Day Close 24 October 2020
- Official Close 31 December 2020

Link to: [UN75 video](#)

Link to Website: <https://www.un.org/en/un75/join-conversation>

Bahá'í Perspectives on Agriculture and Food

Wilmette Institute Online Course

January 23, 2020—March 12, 2020

Bahá'u'lláh described agriculture as a "a vital and important matter" that was foremost among the principles "conducive to the advancement of mankind and to the reconstruction of the world" (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After the Kitáb-i-Aqdas 90, 89). Yet current agricultural policy often prioritizes yield and profit over health, sustainability, and sociocultural features of rural communities, while the poor struggle to even feed themselves, and climate change makes farming increasingly unpredictable. These and other factors threaten food security. In *Bahá'í Perspectives on Agriculture and Food*, we will examine the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith on agriculture, food, and rural development; relate these teachings to contemporary public discourse on these issues; and suggest ways in which agricultural activities can be incorporated into core activities, community-building, and emerging social action.

Required Text: "The Spirit of Agriculture" by Paul Hanley. Available from George Ronald Publisher, and on Amazon (Kindle).

Faculty: Paul Hanley, Arthur Lyon Dahl, Neil Whatley, Gary Reusche, Kimberley Naqvi

For more information and to register, go [here](#).



Rethinking Success: a way to save the planet and ourselves

Ongoing Webinars that started with Arthur Dahl 18 December 2019

In support of the next IEF annual conference in partnership with ebbf - Ethical Business Building the Future, in Lisbon, Portugal, 14-17 May 2020, we are planning a year-long consultation on the theme of "Rethinking Success" and its implications.

Register for the conference at: <http://ebbf.org/event/ebbf-30th-international-annual-learning-event-lisbon/#ebbf> Early bird registration expires 28 February 2020.

The theme is being introduced in a series of ebbf webinars on Zoom. The first was on 18 December 2019 with IEF President Arthur Dahl giving a systems perspective on *Rethinking Success: what key dimensions of success are we failing to address*. It is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYi90Xo9h1s&feature=youtu.be>, and the text is [here](#).

Laily Miller-Muro, Director of the Tahirih Justice Centre was in a webinar about *Rethinking Success : Reexamining Justice* on 15 January 2020.

IEF Board member Victoria Thoresen will also participate in an ebbf webinar on 5 February 2020.

More events and ways to participate will be announced as plans are developed.

WEF Global Risks Report 2020

The 15th edition of the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report 2020 is published as critical risks are manifesting. The global economy is facing an increased risk of stagnation, climate change is striking harder and more rapidly than expected, and fragmented cyberspace threatens the full potential of next-generation technologies — all while citizens worldwide protest political and economic conditions and voice concerns about systems that exacerbate inequality. The challenges before us demand immediate collective action, but fractures within the global community appear to only be widening. Stakeholders need to act quickly and with purpose within an unsettled global landscape. For the first time the Global Risks Report is dominated by the environment, with climate-linked issues like extreme heat and ecosystems loss highlighted. Goeconomic and political pressures are also top short-term concerns.



Fears on climate change have dominated discussions surrounding global risks

Image: Unsplash/Kyle Glenn

Following a year of floods and droughts, when fires ravaged Australia and the Amazon, and teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg was chosen as Time's Person of the Year, it is perhaps little wonder that environmental issues dominate leaders' concerns for the future. But the latest edition of the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report shows how loudly they are sounding the alarm. Established leaders and up-and-comers agree: climate change is the stand-out long-term risk the world faces. The report, which identifies the top threats facing our world by likelihood and extent of impact, names failure to mitigate and adapt to climate change as the key concern for the Forum's network of business leaders, NGOs, academics and others. The group places it as the number one risk by impact and number two by likelihood over the next 10 years. In fact, respondents to the Global Risks Perception Survey, which underpins the report, rank issues related to global warming – such as extreme weather and biodiversity loss – as the top five risks in terms of likelihood over the coming decade. This is the first time one category has occupied all of the top slots since the report was launched in 2006. Climate change is hitting harder and accelerating faster than many people predicted. And efforts to meet commitments to limit global warming are slipping, with countries veering off course.

Long term risk outlook by likelihood over the next decade

1. extreme weather
2. climate action failure
3. natural disaster
4. biodiversity loss
5. human-made environmental disasters
6. data fraud or theft
7. cyberattacks
8. water crises
9. global governance failure
10. asset bubble

Top ten long term risks by impact

1. climate action failure
2. weapons of mass destruction
3. biodiversity loss
4. extreme weather
5. water crises
6. information infrastructure breakdown
7. natural disasters
8. cyberattacks
9. human-made environmental disasters
10. infectious diseases

Short-term risk outlook in 2020

1. economic confrontations
2. domestic political polarization
3. extreme heat waves
4. destruction of natural ecosystems
5. cyberattacks: infrastructure
6. protectionism on trade/investment
7. populist and nativist agendas
8. cyberattacks: theft of money/data
9. recession in a major economy
10. uncontrolled fires

Gathering economic clouds

Growing downward pressure on the global economy, driven by fragile macroeconomic structures and financial inequality, is deemed the biggest short-term threat by the 'multi-stakeholders' questioned. The risk of stagnation is exacerbated as leaders increasingly follow nationalist policies. Over three-

quarters of respondents think this darkening economic outlook and domestic political polarization are set to become more likely in the short term.

Trade tensions and geopolitical turbulence are also adding to the economic uncertainty – in particular the potential fallout from the United States and China’s trade stand-off. The two countries account for more than 40% of global GDP. They are also the world’s top two emitters of greenhouse gases. So the world’s economic performance and ability to address climate change is inextricably linked with theirs.

Risks in a digital world

Geopolitical and economic uncertainties are also driving concerns about digital technology: unequal access, a lack of governance, and more frequent and more damaging cyberattacks. The report highlights how long-mounting interconnected risks are starting to be felt. The synchronized slowdown of the global economy, the warmest temperatures on record and an increasingly unstable geopolitical environment are creating significant challenges. “It is sobering that in the face of this development, when the challenges before us demand immediate collective action, fractures within the global community appear to only be widening,” the report says.

Waiting for the fog of geopolitical and geoeconomic uncertainty to lift before taking action is not a viable option, and would mean missing crucial windows to address pressing issues, it continues. The good news is that, despite global divisions, some businesses are committed to looking beyond their balance sheets towards tackling the urgent issues that are looming.

Source: WEF, Charlotte Edmond, Senior Writer, Formative Content, 15 January 2020.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/global-risks-climate-change-cyberattacks-economic-political/>

Key outcomes of COP25 climate talks

For those interested in the climate negotiations, the report by Climate Brief on the outcomes of the Madrid Conference of the Parties (COP25) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change gives an excellent review of the key outcomes:

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop25-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-un-climate-talks-in-madrid>

The year 2020 will be extremely important for action on the climate crisis, as well as on biodiversity and on the future of global governance.



Australia is burning, coral reefs are dying. What next?

Blog by Arthur Dahl

As we watch in horror at a continent in flames and hear repeated stories of dying coral reefs, it is important to ask what comes next? I am no expert on Australian vegetation, but ecological science can offer some theoretical considerations, and suggest the significance of the climate crisis to what we are observing around the world. I do know about coral reefs, and see striking parallels with what is happening on land.

Many ecosystems are adapted to major disruptions. Forest fires are a natural occurrence. Coral reefs

are smashed by cyclones. Resilience is one sign of successful ecosystems. They are knocked down and bounce back. The result is often a mosaic of parts of ecosystems at various stages of regeneration, some mature and fully developed, others going through stages of succession towards maturity. On land, some species regenerate from rootstocks after a fire, or seeds buried in the soil sprout in the new sunlight. Some conifers only release their seeds after a fire has opened their cones. Fires are a natural occurrence in areas with dry seasons like Australia and California. A damaged coral reef can be repopulated by larvae and immigrants coming from elsewhere, assuming there is a healthy reef as a source.

What has changed is the scale of human impacts, especially linked to climate change. In a landscape of burned and unburned areas, seeds are carried into the burned area by birds or the wind, wildlife moves in from adjacent habitats, and the forest regenerates. When climate change increases the frequency of fires or storms so that there is insufficient time for the ecosystem to recover, the ecosystem is degraded and may lose essential species or components. With the massive burns in Australia, such large areas are affected that there are not longer adjacent forests to support regeneration. Coral bleaching over large areas from high water temperatures has the same effect; the ecosystem loses the capacity to recover. Instead, the degraded area is occupied by weeds or invasive species, or algae on the reef, and this can prevent the return of the original communities.

An additional factor on land has been the natural desire to protect forests from fire, either because of human occupation of the area with houses, tourism or other activities, or simply because burned areas are unattractive. Where fires were a natural part of the ecosystem cycle, returning nutrients to the soil, clearing out an excessive accumulation of biomass and preventing really destructive fires, the result has been devastation when a fire does finally occur. The sequoias of California have fire-resistant bark, so occasional fires would clear out fast-growing competitors and allow young sequoias to establish themselves. Controlled burning is necessary to maintain the sequoia ecosystem. The many houses burned in Australia suggest that some forests where fire is a necessary part of the ecosystem are inappropriate for human habitation.

In the light of these significant impacts of the climate crisis, what is required to compensate for the damage we have caused? Where we have destroyed natural resilience, we must replace it with compensating human actions. First would be to save and protect any remaining fragments of the natural ecosystems that have survived and might contribute to recovery. Then we shall have to replant native species before invasives take over, and artificially rebuild the key elements of the original ecosystem. As the forest or reef regenerates, then missing elements of wildlife can be reintroduced. As we acknowledge the environmental havoc we have wrought, and cut back our damaging activities, environmental restoration will become a priority to rebuild the carrying capacity of our planet so that it can support an ever-advancing, sustainable human civilisation.

In the Book “God Passes By” Shoghi Effendi wrote about humanity :

“Its present state, indeed even its immediate future, is dark, distressingly dark. Its distant future, however, is radiant, gloriously radiant—so radiant that no eye can visualize it.”

In the same book, he quoted the words of Bahá'u'lláh :

“The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective.” ...

“These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come... Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.” ...

“All nations and kindreds,” ‘Abdu'l-Bahá likewise has written, “...will become a single nation. ... All men will ... be blended into one race, and become a single people. All will dwell in one common fatherland, which is the planet itself.”
