



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.



**United
Nations**

UN75
2020 AND BEYOND

**UN75
Global
Governance
Forum**

How can we harness our collective strength among governments, global civil society, UN agencies, and the business community to design the Future We Want, The UN We Need?

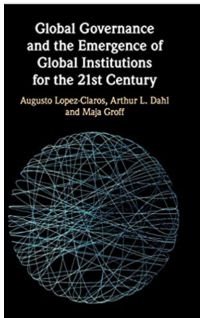
WHEN: September 16 & 17, 2020 / September 18: Community-driven Sessions

WHERE: Virtual Event

WHO: Stakeholders from civil society, scholars, policy entrepreneurs, UN system bodies and Member States, the private sector, and philanthropic institutions.

As we approach the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations under the banner “the future we want, the UN we need”, we reflect on the complex challenges facing our world, including cross-border health pandemics, economic shocks, inequality, climate instability, and threats to peace and security, and bring forward a call to action. Talking about what the UN system can do for us and the changes required is important. An even more critical challenge is to engage stakeholders from within and outside the world body to co-create partnerships and pathways to the future we fervently desire and a United Nations that inspires and serves all humanity.

This conference will feature many important speakers. Augusto Lopez-Claros and Maja Groff will each be chairing sessions, and the Baha'i International Community will have a session with Daniel Perell.



Of particular interest to IEF members will be the [launch of the book *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century*](#) with authors Augusto Lopez-Claros, IEF member Maja Groff, and IEF president Arthur Lyon Dahl. The book launch will take place on **Friday 18 September 2020, 12:00 pm – 1:20 pm EDT; 18:00 - 19:20 CEST**.

For the whole **UN75 Global Governance Forum Virtual Event: *Designing a Roadmap for The Future We Want, The UN We Need*** on 16-18 September, [REGISTER HERE](#) and go the [Agenda](#) and [Session Overviews](#)

Members Corner

IEF welcomes the following new members:

Jing Chen, USA
Tahirih Matthee, South Africa
Zinzan Gurney, United Kingdom
Ned Walker, USA

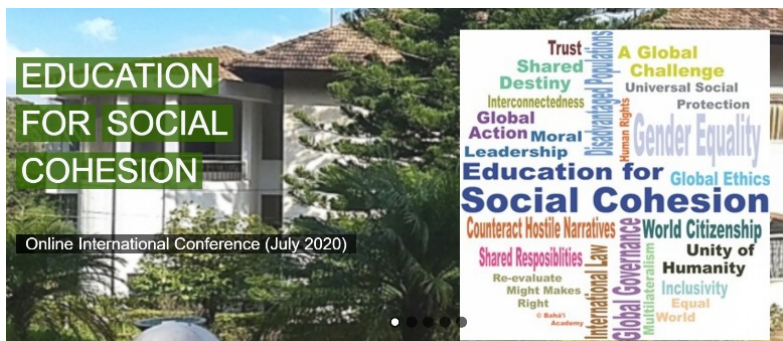
We look forward to getting to know you better and invite your active participation with IEF!

Report of the International Environment Forum 24th General Assembly

The 24th General Assembly of the International Environment Forum was held over the Internet on the Zoom platform on 22 August 2020 with 23 members attending.

Members elected the IEF Governing Board by email on 8-21 August. The teller, Michael Richards (UK), reported that 36 members had voted and all the ballots were valid. The Governing Board for the coming year consists of Arthur Dahl (Switzerland), Christine Muller (USA), Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen (Netherlands), Laurent Mesbah (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Victoria Thoresen (Norway), Halldor Thorgeirsson (Iceland), and Wendi Momen (UK).

You can read the full report of the 24th General Assembly here: <https://www.iefworld.org/genass24>



**Baha'i Academy
in Panchgani is
Looking for Researchers**

Since Social Cohesion and Human Values are interdisciplinary subjects, the candidates can be from various disciplines and backgrounds.

The present focus is in the context of the forthcoming International Webinars on Education for Social Cohesion, a post-Conference activity of the International Conference we organized jointly in July.

Themes of the research papers for the Webinars are life-long efforts for social cohesion and the same themes of the International Conference, namely:

THEME 1: Barriers to Social Cohesion (Social Disparities And Discriminations, Racism, Gender Inequality, Prejudices, Violation Of The Human Rights, Unbridled Nationalism, Religious Strife)

THEME 2: Economic and Developmental Dimensions (Economic disparities, extremes of poverty and wealth, role of women in poverty alleviation, inclusive development, spiritual indicators of development)

THEME 3: Education for Social Cohesion (Universal education and role of teachers in laying the foundation of a new world order, Service Learning Activities, Use of art for promoting social cohesion, education in universal human values, Education for life processes)

IEF members interested in being a candidate to serve as a researcher, please, inform the IEF Secretariat by 19 September: ief@iefworld.org

Wilmette Institute Course Sustainable Development and Human Prosperity

10 September-25 November 2020

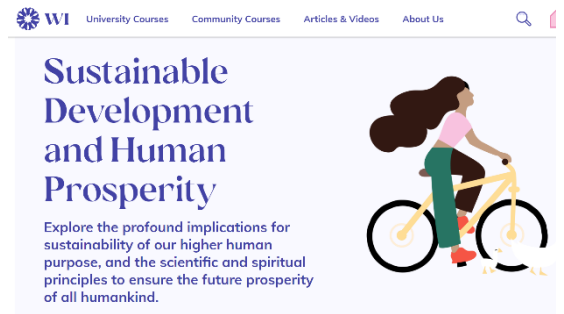
It is still possible to register for this course. Registration deadline is 17 September. The course has started with participants from all corners of the world: Australia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Congo, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Ukraine, Senegal, South Africa, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Participants will explore the profound implications of sustainability for our higher human purpose, and the scientific and spiritual principles to ensure the future prosperity of all humankind.

All the course faculty are IEF members: Arthur Dahl, Christine Muller and Laurent Mesbah

For more information, visit

[COURSE PAGE](#)
[WATCH THE VIDEO INTRODUCTION](#)
[VIEW/DOWNLOAD SYLLABUS](#)
[REGISTER NOW](#)



Bahá'í Chair for World Peace Annual Lecture 2020 A Conversation on Climate Science, Policy, and Justice

with Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson
Thursday September 17, 2020, 3pm EDT

The Bahá'í Chair for World Peace is delighted to host this conversation with Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, moderated by Professor Hoda Mahmoudi and Professor Rashawn Ray, as the Annual Lecture 2020.

Dr. Johnson is a marine biologist, policy expert, writer, and Brooklyn native. She is founder of Urban Ocean Lab, a think tank for the future of coastal cities, and founder and CEO of Ocean Collectiv, a consulting firm for conservation solutions.

Recently, she co-created the Blue New Deal, a roadmap for including the ocean in climate policy. Previously, she was executive director of the Waitt Institute, developed policy at the EPA and NOAA, served as a leader of the March for Science, and taught as an adjunct professor at New York University. Dr. Johnson earned a BA

from Harvard University in environmental science and public policy, and a Ph.D. from Scripps Institution of Oceanography in marine biology.

Virtual Event - You must register in advance for the event at tinyurl.com/bahai-johnson
For more information, visit <http://bahaichair.umd.edu/annuallecture20>

2020 Faith Call to Action for UN Biodiversity Summit

The IEF has signed up to the Faith Call to Action below in advance of the UN Biodiversity Summit on 30 September 2020. It has been drafted by a number of faith groups working with the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Beliefs and Values Program, and the WWF New Deal for Nature and People campaign. The drafting team consisted of representatives from the Bahá'í International Community, Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation, Bhumi Global, The Parliament of the World's Religions, and World Evangelical Alliance.

The natural world is a vital source of humanity's collective flourishing, and in its grandeur can be found signs of the Divine. Throughout history, and in all parts of the world, nature is the physical loom upon which the tapestry of culture, civilization, and peace is woven. Religious and spiritual traditions compel us to care for creation, of which we are an integral part, with love, respect, and reverence.

We grieve the excessive use of natural resources that disrupts the balance of ecosystems and acknowledge our shortcomings in aligning our actions with the values and tenants of our traditions. Yet we also recognize the immense power of faith to bring about radical positive change by imparting hope and summoning the courage necessary for billions to respond to the challenges and crises before us.

As people of faith and spirit, we have a responsibility to ensure our communities cultivate an appreciation for the natural world. Transformation comes through nurturing faithful attitudes and approaches that create sustainable patterns of individual lifestyles and collective actions. Committing to spiritual wisdom and scientific truth, we can return to a more integrated relationship with the earth, where there is abundance for all, scarcity for none, and human life thriving in harmony with the natural world.

Upholding these understandings, and honoring the work that has come before, the undersigned organizations, make the following commitments and invite all those of good will to join us in:

- Developing and implementing long term, values-based and scientifically-informed plans to regenerate, protect, and nurture the Earth's ecosystems for the next decade and beyond.
- Working cooperatively, and collectively, helping each other along the journey to achieve a carbon neutral, nature-positive future.
- Working with humility, understanding that many solutions are to be found in nature.
- Integrating humanity's collective wisdom into our efforts, particularly that of indigenous communities and the perspectives of those most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental degradation.
- Engaging in a process of periodic tracking, re-assessment, and re-alignment in light of changing realities and opportunities.

We also call upon Heads of State and Governments at the UN 2020 Summit on Biodiversity and others to join us in taking bold and decisive leadership to integrate nature into all international frameworks and agreements. We affirm our commitment to the United Nations' vision and the aspirations outlined in its Charter and will continue to engage with UN processes that advance humanity's harmonious relationship with nature.

Recognizing that safeguarding the planet requires a coordinated approach across all actors and initiatives, we align ourselves with the other calls to action being produced for this occasion at this time by the international community and welcome further collaboration in achieving our shared goals.

Community Gardening: A Fertile Ground for Spiritual Growth?

By IEF Member Laurent Mesbah and Rebecca Teclemariam-Mesbah

“I have been keeping watch on the plants growing all summer, even from my window, and lots of things have happened and by the way thank you for repairing the swing!” an excited nine-year-old child in Sarajevo told me at the end of August. Just a couple of months earlier with friends we had started planting vegetables and flowers in the concrete planters around the concrete playground built on top of a parking lot facing his building in a tight residential area near the city center. Children spontaneously gathered around and joined in the activities. They called on their parents and grandparents who came to check on what we were doing. Everyone engaged in conversation and then they gave us advice, seeds, and encouragement. A mother came to help with weeding; another offered a container to be used as a bin so we could clean the area. Others came later and fixed the swing that had been broken for some time. I could not take any credit for the repair of the swing, but the child had probably rightly linked the starting of the plantings with the improvement of his environment as well as his own happiness.



My previous experience in Sarajevo was to design and manage the “Earth School Programme” in a private school located next to a public forest. This was where children and junior youth, together with their teachers, participated in and helped to carry out activities needed for a garden. These included design and structure, planting, nurturing, harvesting, and food processing, as well as monitoring ecosystems, specifically their function and services. Participants thus learned about natural ecosystems and nature cycles taking into account their practical implications for sustainable food, medicine, and non-food production in addition to other services provided by nature such as provisioning services [where ecosystems produce products such as food, raw material, fresh water, and medicine], regulating services [for climate control, clean water, and clean air], and cultural services [including aesthetic inspiration, cultural identity, sense of home, and spiritual experiences related to the natural environment].



Additionally, regular interaction with neighbors of all ages ensured that the public space would be respected and accepted by the community such that community members could understand the educational opportunity this space provided. Grandparents took their grandchildren on walks through the walking paths that had trees identified with tags; youth sat in the shaded areas; and a tree house became the gathering place for all to observe the events in the pond below, to appreciate growth of the plants, and more importantly to engage in meaningful conversation.

Community gardening is not new, but it is increasingly popular in urban areas. In a socially disconnected urban area, it has been shown to improve the well-being of individuals and to provide a wide range of multiple benefits, such as healthy body weights, physical activity, food security, ownership and pride, urban beautification, and community cohesion (Egli *et al.*, 2016). It also reintroduces connections and focuses attention on the forces of nature such as growth, movement, and renewal. These, in turn, link to spiritual forces such as hope, service, perseverance, and happiness.

Community building evolves as the garden improves and grows. Conversations about children's education as well as the current health crisis and its link to the environment, underline the need for spiritual sustenance. These chats spur on the need for devotional gatherings in the neighborhood. They also engage more parents and family members in the neighborhood including youth who can become resources to contribute as animators of the Junior Youth Spiritual Empowerment Programme and who can be tapped as teachers for the spiritual education of the children, thereby allowing community interactions to grow in quality and in number.

On the global scene, international institutions such as the United Nations (UN) discuss the future of humanity as well as the need for science, education, and spiritual values. The ambitious and much needed UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to which IEF has contributed during the consultation process at every level, have been agreed upon by UN member states in September 2015. However, their implementation lacks sufficient will and capacity to efficiently translate the global goals into local action. The humble examples shared here and the many more worldwide community gardens can provide some inspiration for possible local action that can contribute to many of the SDGs.

As we witness disintegration processes around us, community building activities at the local level, such as community gardening, can contribute at the grassroots level to building a more just, integrated, and united world which Baha'is see as their calling. For some, community gardening could be a step towards building an agency for structural change; for others it is the door to urban agriculture. Nevertheless, it definitely is an endeavour that merits consideration.

Degrowth

by IEF Member Gary Reusche

Degrowth! In a [world where our environmental footprint exceeds the resources of the planet](#) and where politicians talk about the need for economic growth, degrowth might be a word that should increase in use and popularity.

The three countries with the largest total ecological footprint are the US, China, and India. China and India, as well as a number of countries in Central Asia, West Africa, and Central Africa, have GDP growth at more than 3.62%. [Comparing ecological footprints of all countries](#) shows that almost all countries are growing. Thus overuse of the earth's resources will increase.

Maybe I'm wrong, or maybe I have oversimplified the problem, but if we do not embrace "degrowth" as a world strategy, we can say goodbye to our future. If we cannot embrace degrowth, perhaps the problem will have to be mitigated by war or runaway pandemics! Degrowth mandates a transformation and new assumptions about what we need to live, to be successful, and to fulfill our purpose during the time we spend on earth. Degrowth needs to be peaceful and based on a common understanding that we are one people, that we must live together (it is not really a choice), and that we live in one interconnected world. We used to say: "One planet, one people please!" But I think now we need a new tune! Maybe it should be: "One planet, one people NOW!"

Below is a link to an article written by a student. Let me applaud his initiative and put forth the same hope that "someone will hear, and just might listen." This is a subject for discourse and social action. I think we need to bring the subject of degrowth to our communities, to our professions, to the youth, and even to politicians. Then these words must be followed up with action. Can we suggest to youth who anxiously want a new sports car, that perhaps a bicycle would be better for her or his health, and the health of the planet?

[An Open Letter to Research and Degrowth by Christopher Conrad](#)

GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE
TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION AND PRAXIS

A Jolt in Consciousness

Great Transition Initiative

A contribution to the forum: **After the Pandemic: Which Future?**

by **Arthur Lyon Dahl**

September 2020

<https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/pandemic-scenario-dahl>

We are at a tipping point, where the future could go in any of the three directions of GTI's scenarios: the basic continuity of Conventional Worlds, the descent of Barbarization, or the progression of Great Transitions.

Powerful forces are mobilizing enormous financial resources to return to business-as-usual for the benefit of the rich and powerful, planting the seeds of the next crisis in the process. At the same time, the world could easily turn towards barbarism as authoritarian politicians fan the flames of populism, xenophobia, racism, and fragmentation feeding off the anger and frustration of those left behind by the neoliberal economy.

How do we resist these forces of disintegration and tip the balance towards the Great Transition?

The forces of integration have also been building momentum, with information systems uniting the world as never before and empowering a sense of belonging to one human family. Increasing numbers, particularly among the young, are working to overcome the forces that divide us and to lay the foundations for an emerging world civilization. Until now, they have had little success in overcoming the momentum of the dominant system.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created possibilities that previously seemed unrealistic. The brakes have been slammed on the globalized economy that has been plundering the planet's resources, affecting every country simultaneously. The unsustainable debt bubble that has been maintaining economic momentum is now expanding, fed by massive government expenditures to prevent economic collapse, making a financial crisis almost inevitable. While wealthy urban areas were struck first, it was only a matter of time before COVID-19 hit Third World cities and the rural poor, disrupting agriculture and raising the risk of global famine. None of this has reversed the climate crisis that is setting back development and imposing increasing costs on society. The chaos

and suffering on the horizon could be horrendous. It is hard to imagine how we might return to life as it was before. At the same time, many obstacles to change are being weakened or swept away.

The door may now be opening for a significant transformation in human society. A consumerist lifestyle that seemed essential to many now appears superficial and meaningless, as more important human values and social relationships emerge. People that labored invisibly in the lower reaches of our communities suddenly are appreciated for the critical services they perform. The persistence of poverty in distant countries that has long been ignored is now understood as an immediate threat to our global future.

A complete reimagining of the whole economic system may be necessary to start over on a more moderate, just, and sustainable basis. What should be our priority faced with such challenges? Beyond assuring our immediate health and safety, there is a desperate need for positive ways forward. In part, these must be spiritual in nature, reinforcing a sense of solidarity for all the members of our human family, building a spirit of community with everyone of good will, and helping people to rise to their higher human purpose. More generally, many around the world are questioning the basic assumptions underlying our consumer society and asking fundamental questions about what is really important in life. They are finding that much of what they considered necessities were not after all. Cut off from normal interactions, they are discovering how important human contact and social relationships really are.

This can help to build wide public support for rapid and constructive change, the paradigm shift called for in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda, a fundamental transformation to a society and economy rooted in justice and sustainability.

We now have an opportunity to imagine in more detail what the Great Transition might do to address the crises that are now so obvious. What

global health system should we build that would guarantee to every human being an adequate level of care in a pandemic, as well as during normal times, and that would integrate the world's capacities to respond to such emerging threats? How might we use the new information technologies to better coordinate global food production, both ensuring decent incomes to farmers and rural workers at the base of supply chains, and guaranteeing a healthy diet to everyone on the planet? What global financial system could raise the revenue to provide such services as basic human rights through graduated taxation on all forms of wealth creation, guaranteeing a minimum income to everyone in need, and preventing the present excessive accumulation of individual wealth? What system of global governance could ensure world peace, protect and manage the global environmental commons, eliminate corruption and extreme inequality, and ensure national autonomy and diversity in a spirit of subsidiarity?¹

We need to be able to convince both world leaders and the global public that there are practical and positive ways forward towards the Great Transition, and that now is the time to start. We may not be able to prevent the crises on the immediate horizon, but we can already start planning and building what should come after. We do not have all the answers, but we have through our values a direction of travel and a willingness to learn. If we share openly, listen to each other in all our diversity, explore contributions from whatever source, act on the best ideas, and reflect together on the results, we can move forward. In these dark times, we all need to rise to the occasion and to face the future positively and creatively.

1. See my recent book with Augusto Lopez-Claros and Maja Groff: *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

Turning on the Spiritual Light to Solve Humanity's Problems

by IEF Member Christine Muller

This article posted by BahaiTeachings.org on 3 September, 2020 may be of special interest to our new members and associates:

The coronavirus pandemic brought illness, loss of loved ones, and economic hardship to many people worldwide — exacerbating existing social problems such as poverty, joblessness, and inequality.

Simultaneously, the horrible long-standing disease of racism has finally come to the general public's attention.

How is it possible to think about the existential threats to humanity — climate change, the loss of biodiversity, and the looming food crisis — at a time when dealing with racial injustice and the pandemic can often feel so overwhelming?

Overcoming these problems is possible when we recognize their common root and by elevating our consciousness to a world-embracing vision. Baha'u'llah, the founder and prophet of the Baha'i Faith, [wrote](#): "Let your vision be world-embracing rather than confined to your own self."

The article discusses how the light of a world-embracing vision can help us tackle these difficult issues. You can read it in [English here](#) and in [Spanish here](#).

The United Nations at 75 Years Prospects and Potentials: The Future We Want

Report on the Global Online Event Held on Thursday, 3 September 2020

In connection with the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations Charter, there was a forward-looking global discussion on the future of the United Nations hosted by the Bahá'í International Community and featuring three IEF members. Under the banner of "the future we want, the UN we need," we reflected on the global institutional arrangements that we currently have — and that may be needed in the future — to respond to the

complex and inter-related challenges facing our world, including global pandemics, economic shocks, inequality, climate instability, and threats to peace and security. We considered how we can harness our collective strength among governments, global civil society, UN agencies, the business community, youth and the general public to design *The Future We Want, The UN We Need*.

In an era of accelerated connectivity and advanced technology, we presented a fresh, modern perspective to the UN Charter's founding principles to update our vision and promote a truly "people-centered" architecture for global collective action.

The event followed on from the 26 June 2020 UN Charter Day, and prepared for the UN General Assembly's 75th Session and high-level meeting on Monday, 21 September 2020 on the theme, 'The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism'.

Event Partners: [UN2020](#); Faculty of Global Governance and Global Affairs (FGGA), Leiden University, The Hague; [Stimson Center](#); [Together First \(TF\)](#); Global Governance Forum (GGF); Chinese Initiative on International Law; [Bahá'í International Community](#); United Nations Association of the Netherlands

PROGRAMME

- [Opening Remarks](#): **Daniel Perell**, Representative to the UN, Bahá'í International Community, New York
- **Setting the Stage: The United Nations at 75**
 - **Alanna O'Malley**, Chair of UN Studies in Peace and Justice, Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs Leiden University
 - **Simone Filippini**, United Nations Association of The Netherlands (NVVN)

Current Prospects, Civil Society Engagement and Near- and Medium-term Reforms

- **UN75 Political Declaration: The Good, The Bad, & Not-So-Ugly Ways Forward**
 - **Richard Ponzio**, Director, Just Security 2020 Program, The Stimson Center
- **UN2020 and the UN75 People's Declaration and Plan for Global Action**
 - **Denison Jayasooria**, Co-Chair, Malaysian CSO-SDG Alliance
 - **Jocelyn Jayasooria**, UN2020 Communications Associate, Australia
- **Together First (TF): Stepping Stones for a Better Future: A Global To Do List**
 - **Enyseh Teimory**, Communications Officer, UNA-UK
- **UN75 Global Governance Forum & its Innovation Track for Revitalizing Global Institutions**
 - **Cristina Petcu**, Research Associate, Just Security 2020 Program, The Stimson Center

Longer-term UN Reforms:

- **Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century**
 - **Augusto Lopez-Claros**, Chair, Global Governance Form (GGF), former Director, Global Indicators Group at the World Bank Group
 - **Maja Groff**, International Lawyer, Visiting Professor on the topic of global challenges at Leiden University College (LUC), Faculty of Global Governance and Global Affairs (FGGA)
 - **Arthur Dahl**, President International Environment Forum, former Deputy Assistant Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UN75 Process of the UN Secretariat

Natalie Samarasinghe, Chief of Strategy, UN75 Office

The recording of the session can be viewed [here](#) (2 hours 26 minutes)

Many contributors highlighted certain upcoming opportunities and resources. A few can be found below:

- You can register for the [UN75 Global Governance Forum](#) (Sept. 16-18) (please note in particular an 18 September UN75 Declaration panel which will include the co-facilitators of the drafting process)
- Stimson's latest report is [UN 2.0: Ten Innovations for Global Governance – 75 Years beyond San](#)

[Francisco](#)

- You can find and endorse the UN75 People's Declaration [here](#).
- For more information on UN75's work visit [this](#) site.
- The free downloadable version of the book *Global Governance and the Emergence of Global Institutions for the 21st Century* is [here](#).

A Compelling Vision for Humanity

by Daniel Perell, Representative of the Baha'i International Community and IEF Member

Posted on September 2, 2020 by UN2020

<http://un2020.org/2020/09/02/a-compelling-vision-for-humanity/>

UN2020 Coordinating Partner & UN75 People's Declaration Coordinator

Throughout the ages, humanity has been advancing on a winding path towards higher degrees of maturity. The well-being of humankind is not static; it requires ever greater degrees of commitment to fulfilling ever increasing ambitions. At each stage, even significant advances may prove inadequate. And it is in these moments of great crisis when humanity is called on, by virtue of the prevailing circumstances, to reconsider its trajectory. Largely, though not exclusively, driven by enormous tragedy, these moments are significant in the narrative of human progress. They become key markers, elements of our unfolding story – though, their historical import may be difficult to discern at the time. Few could have predicted, for instance, the extent and effect of either of the World Wars at their outset – yet the duration and depth of both tragedies gave rise to new conceptions of global governance, as seen in the emergence of the League of Nations and United Nations, respectively.

At this, the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, the world is seeing yet another collective tragedy unfolding, its effects analogous to that of a war, though of a different form. And many predict that it presages additional global calamities. Like previous historic inflection points, a robust dialogue on the future of humanity is needed. The People's Declaration and Program for Global Action adopted at the UN75 People's Forum in May is one contribution to this necessary global discourse. Completed before the Declaration to be adopted by world leaders later this month, it offers an approach to the global problems we face that goes beyond the confines of political boundaries. Speaking in the voice of "we the peoples", it analyzes the reality of the world in which we live, articulates the needs of humanity in light of that reality, and lays out a process by which those needs can be met. It turns to the UN in its current form as a starting point for further iteration, but challenges some of the underlying assumptions which, although helpful at the inception of the UN, have shown their limitations in light of present circumstances.

The People's Declaration was put together through a process of collecting perspectives from a wide range of voices around the world and identifying points of convergence at the highest level of consensus. Recognizing that "progress depends on universal participation" and that "the advance of one leads to the advance of all", by harmonizing our diverse perspectives we hope to help humanity walk a path towards greater flourishing.

The hope is that significant change at this time of profound transition, can be ushered in without comparable degrees of suffering. Through a lively and growing discussion, we hope to articulate a compelling vision for humanity, one that describes a destiny in which our highest aspirations find expression. While the great sacrifices that led to the League of Nations and the United Nations can be measured in the immense loss of life, let us commit to bringing about a more just and equal world through only the loss of outworn ideas and narrow self-interest.

The Way Forward

In order to advance a conversation on the future of humanity, there are certain necessary preconditions. First, and most importantly, we must acknowledge that we do not have a system for global governance suited to today's needs and that we do not know what that system will look like. Logically, this leads to acknowledging a second point: humanity's interconnectedness, oneness and, accordingly, our shared destiny. This is what

distinguishes the modern era from any time that preceded it. Third, certain values in pursuit of equality and dignity must increasingly guide our behavior: the search for truth, trustworthiness, justice, honesty, integrity, to list a few. Finally, as consensus around these three points is consolidated, substantive dialogue and experimentation around new arrangements of governance can take place.

Specific reforms have been presented time and again, but they often meet resistance – often for reasons of territorial sovereignty. By looking at areas of the UN where the ceding of sovereignty has produced useful results (e.g. technical bodies like the International Telecommunication Union and the International Civil Aviation Organization), similar measures could help serve to strengthen the hand of those trying to enact reforms of the peace and security architecture, or the climate and environmental institutions. More dramatic ideas, like a global tax body, a standing reserve force, or a World Parliament would be well served by further discussion and the broadening of consensus. This historic UN anniversary, coincident with the unfortunate nexus of cascading global crises, lends an opportunity for sustained deliberations about the next steps in humanity’s efforts towards just governance at all levels.

Ultimately, humanity requires a global structure that is as integrated and comprehensive as the global realities it faces. While its implementation may seem out of reach at the moment, as Nelson Mandela famously said “it always seems impossible, until it’s done”. So let’s get to work.

Multi Faith Advisory Council to the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Religion and Development

Faith in the UN: A Global Online Conference

Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/news/multi-faith-advisory-council-hosts-global-conference-75th-anniversary-united>

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations, the Multi-faith Advisory Council (MFAC) organized an online conference titled “Faith in the UN: Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations and looking to the future”. The event took place on 8 September at 8:00am (EDT). It provided a platform for representatives of faith-based organizations (FBO), faith leaders and key voices of UN agencies to discuss a variety of pressing issues and their respective roles in dealing with them.

This is the link for the [conference program](#).



Global Standard Supports Design and Scaling-up of Nature-based Solutions

Source: [IISD / SDG Knowledge Hub](#)

IUCN has launched the first-ever [Global Standard for Nature-based Solutions](#). The Standard guides users through Nature-based Solutions (NbS) applications and sets benchmarks for their progress. [Launched](#) on 23 July 2020, the IUCN Global Standard for NbS consists of eight criteria and associated indicators that address considerations related to biodiversity, economy, and society, as well as resilient project management.