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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.

IEF Annual Conference July 11 and 12

The IEF Annual Conference will take place in collaboration with the virtual **International Conference on Social Cohesion** organized by the Baha'i Academy in Panchgani, India.

The online conference will address various dimensions of social cohesion and the role that higher academic institutions/NGOs and teachers can play in promoting the same. These dimensions include:

- Social disparities and discrimination, racism, gender inequality, prejudices, unbridled nationalism, religious strife and human rights
- Economic disparities, extremes of poverty and wealth, role of women in poverty alleviation, inclusive development, spiritual indicators of development
- Universal education and role of teachers in laying the foundation of a new world order, distance and open education to reach the un-reached, human rights and human values education, education for development

The conference will take place on Saturday, July 11, and Sunday 12 July 2020 (2.5 hours each day). Look out for a special mailing about conference details in a couple of weeks!

The IEF Annual Meeting will be held separately, also online, in the second part of August.

Members Corner

Passing of Dale Allen

by IEF President Arthur Dahl



Dale Allen with his wife Irma and his parents John and Valera Allen, Swaziland, early 1960s

We learned on 23 May of the recent passing of longtime IEF member Dale Allen, of Mbabane, Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), at the age of 83. He went to pray at a waterfall near his home as he did often, and fell. Dale was from a distinguished Bahá'í family in California, with his older brother Dwight and younger brother Kenton. We were children together at the Geyserville Bahá'í Summer School in California in the 1940s. He remembered participating in the conference founding the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945; his parents were part of the Bahá'í delegation, and he placed Bahá'í statements on the desks of all the delegates.

His parents became Knights of Bahá'u'lláh for opening Swaziland to the Bahá'í Faith in 1954. Dale arrived with his grandmother a few months later, and studied for a while at university in South Africa before going back to America to complete his studies with a B.S. at

the University of Arizona in Agriculture Chemicals and Soils. He returned to Swaziland with his wife Irma in 1960, and later earned an MBA from Rhodesian Technical College. He developed businesses useful to the country, including Swazi Wire Industries - manufacturing nails, wire, fencing, electric fencing and gates. He was also involved in agriculture: sugar cane, vegetables, fruit and nut trees; and food technology: milling maize meal, high protein foods.

Dale was part of the IEF and ebbf - Ethical Business Building the Future delegations to the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, together with his wife Irma, a specialist in environmental education and member of the IEF Governing Board for several years. The IEF expresses its deepest sympathy to Irma on her loss.

Progress Report on UN75

To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations launched a people's debate, UN75. Since many governments were clearly lukewarm towards UN reform, the Secretary-General reached out to the wider society for new ideas and to encourage a wider movement to improve international cooperation and global governance. This aimed to be the largest and furthest-reaching global conversation ever on building the future we want. While many of the events planned for this year have had to be cancelled or moved online because of the pandemic, the process has continued. IEF is a partner in [Together First](#) and has collaborated in the [UN2020](#) process through which civil society is supporting UN75.

The International Environment Forum encouraged its members to contribute to this conversation, as we already [reported in April](#), and the resulting dialogue report has been submitted to the UN secretariat as requested on June 1. We also took part in informal consultations on the possible content of the declaration that heads of state are expected to make at the Summit planned for 21 September.

UN75 People's Forum for the UN We Need

On 14-15 May 2020, UN75 organized an online People's Forum for the UN We Need, with registered participants from 75 countries around the world, over 600 attendees each of the two days, and many more joining through YouTube and Facebook Live. "We the peoples" sent a strong message to the UN and Member States that a stronger multilateral system is needed as a matter of urgency, and that the UN75 High Level Event on 21 September needs to be the catalyst for the transformative changes urgently needed to successfully address 21st century global challenges.

One of many highlights at the Forum was the release of the [UN75 People's Declaration and Plan for Global Action](#), entitled "*Humanity at a Crossroads: Global Solutions for Global Challenges*." H.E. Mr. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, President of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly formally received the Declaration and Plan for Global Action and provided a [statement](#) that discussed the UN's responses to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the evolving role of civil society at the United Nations.

He said "I am heartened to see how strong the support is for multilateralism and how committed you are in the spirit of the UN Charter. Civil society has played indispensable roles in the creation of public awareness and political change in the past. You lay the groundwork for a better future for all."

The Declaration was also the subject of a [video presentation](#) at the virtual Forum. [A second video](#) reinforced the mission of the UN as seen from a young person's perspective.

The Together First Network also released a new report, "[Stepping Stones to a Better Future](#)," that outlines ten practical reforms for a more open, inclusive, fair and effective UN system. In addition to the report, the Together First [ideas hub](#) provides additional detail and background on these ten proposals. The ideas hub also includes submissions from IEF on [Governance, Science and the Climate Crisis](#) and [Global Governance](#).

Four expert panels at the People's Forum included a former Prime Minister, UN officials, ambassadors from the Republic of Korea and the European Union, and a range of civil society leaders, including from the UN2020 and Together First campaigns, discussing various aspects of multistakeholder partnerships and strategies for innovations in global governance.

And final reflections at the Forum reviewed the UN Secretariat's program for leveraging global dialogues on "The Future We Want and the UN We Need." This segment featured a conversation with UN2020 Campaigner Jocelyn Jayasooria (Malaysia) and Fabrizio Hochschild, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations 75th Anniversary. Mr Hochschild appealed to all participants to visit the UN75 site and take the [one-minute survey](#).

Complete video recordings of each day of the UN75 People's Forum for the UN We Need [are available on YouTube](#).

Based on: <https://mailchi.mp/un2020/un75-peoples-forum-highlights>

Fighting Racism and Climate Change with a Holistic Approach

by IEF Member Christine Muller

Racism shows its ugly face in many environmental problems—especially in climate change. Below is a brief look at the intersection of racism and climate change with highlights of some of their

manifold ramifications and a proposed holistic approach for a long-term solution to both problems.

The Impact of Environmental Racism on Communities

If you are a person of color in America, you are more likely to live in a neighborhood close to a coal-fired power-plant, an industrial complex that releases toxic chemicals, a landfill, or even a hazardous waste facility. The air you breathe and the water you drink are more likely polluted than if you lived in a predominantly white suburb. A study(1) reported that non-whites are exposed to 38% higher NO2 concentrations than whites.

Therefore, your chance of suffering from asthma, cancer, and other environmentally-related health problems rises. "Black children are twice as likely to be hospitalized for asthma and are four times as likely to die from asthma as white children."(2) It's not only asthma, but also heart disease: "Reducing NO2 pollution levels for all Americans down to those levels that afflict white communities could reduce the yearly death toll from coronary heart disease alone by 7,000".(1) This toxic exposure is certainly one of several reasons why proportionally more African Americans and Latinos have died from Covid-19.

Although most governments have abolished the laws of racial segregation, its practice continues, and businesses still profit from discriminatory practices. In the face of those practices and because vulnerable communities are not appropriately represented in decision-making institutions, it is difficult for them to fend for themselves.

In recent years, for example, the number of oil and gas pipelines has vastly increased. They are also often situated in minority neighborhoods or on indigenous peoples' lands. The frequent oil spills from pipelines contaminate people's drinking water and agricultural lands, and the widespread gas leaks are explosion risks that significantly contribute to global warming.

Climate Change Impacts People of Color and Indigenous People First and Most

Today, everyone already experiences the effects of a changing climate. Poor people everywhere are suffering first by rising food prices as food crops are diminished from droughts and other impacts. Many people have died or lost their livelihoods in extreme natural disasters exacerbated by climate change, such as storms, floods, heat waves, wildfires, and malnutrition caused by drought. Most vulnerable

are the poor and people of color: the farmers in Africa whose ever-drier lands are no longer productive, the victims of hurricanes in the Philippines and Puerto Rico, the indigenous islanders who will become refugees in the near future because of rising sea levels. These people and their cultures have contributed little to climate change. The wealthiest nations in the world, historically disproportionately white, bear the greatest responsibility for the greenhouse gas emissions that have accumulated in the atmosphere until now. Climate change, then, has become one of the foremost social justice issues of our time.

In addition, recovery after disasters is often much slower for people of color, because they are less likely to have flood insurance, and relief efforts after a disaster are not always just. For example, an analysis by a team at Stony Brook University showed that "following Hurricane Harvey, Houston quickly switched water and electricity back on and emptied most emergency shelters. Meanwhile, several weeks after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico, much of the island was still in 'survival mode.' Both hurricane seasons exposed the close ties between severe weather events and social inequality." (3)

The Historic Connection between Slavery and Climate Change

Slavery has existed for a long time and was even part of the Greek and Roman civilizations. It was formerly sanctioned by society because it provided cheap labor for a flourishing economy. Nevertheless, Baha'u'llah, the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, praised Queen Victoria for the abolishment of slavery in the British Empire early in the 19th century. Since then, slavery has become morally unacceptable all over the world.

Unfortunately, many people are still living in slave-like conditions. Today, however, companies are trying to hide this practice, and people are openly speaking up against this evil. It is interesting to note that discovery of coal, oil, and gas as energy sources has contributed to the relatively quick end of slavery in the industrial nations because machines replaced the work of slaves.

In the past, the main argument for slavery was that it was essential for the economy. Well, that is exactly what many people say today about fossil fuels: Our economy depends on the energy

provided by fossil fuels. That is why many people continue to promote the use of fossil fuels just as people did in the past to justify slavery. If the harm of climate change inflicted on people and all living things is considered, this argument is similarly morally corrupt.

The Need to Create a New Economy, Not Rebuild a Harmful System

It is impossible to have perpetual economic growth in a finite biosphere. The limits of our planet need to be learned and accepted. In the past, it was justified to consider that a growing economy meant desirable progress. And this still holds true for many poor people and countries of the world. However, for the rich countries and for the planet as a whole, the limits of growth have been reached; in fact, they have already been surpassed. The current capitalistic economy exploits the Earth and destroys its life-support systems. It also exploits many people and exacerbates the extremes of wealth and poverty. People of color and indigenous people are suffering the most. Moreover, if business continues as usual with humans living beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth, life-support systems will be destroyed leading to collective suicide. "Re-building" the economy is not the answer; a new economy based on justice and environmental sustainability must be created. The Baha'i-Writings say: "...political and economic theories are solely designed to safeguard the interests of humanity as a whole, and not humanity to be crucified for the preservation of the integrity of any particular law or doctrine."(4)

What Can Be Done?

When working for a lasting solution, it makes sense to address racism and climate change at the same time. While there is a need to urgently fix injustices such as in the US law enforcement and prison systems as well as to fundamentally change the energy, food, and transportation systems, a long-term change in attitude toward each other and toward nature is also a necessity. This change of attitude can only come with a deep realization of the oneness of humankind, that all are equal in the sight of God, and that everyone is strongly interconnected with one another along with all living things.

The practical work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors of human activities and to remove all manifestations of institutional racism requires a deep commitment and strong motivation

that can only come from love. It is only at this level that racism and other forms of prejudice can be removed from hearts and minds, and that we can be motivated to change lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Baha'u'llah calls on all people to spiritually develop and to attain the noble station destined for them by their Creator by widening the circle of their love to all people and all life:

- "Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind."(5)
- "Let no man exalt himself above another; all are but bondslaves before the Lord, and all exemplify the truth that there is none other God but Him."(6)
- "The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men."(7)
- "He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body."(8)

Credit: The first two sections of this article were previously published by BahaiTeachings.org:

<https://bahaiteachings.org/fighting-racism-climate-change/>

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- (2) EPA Fact Sheet Children's Environmental Health Disparities: Black and African American Children and Asthma, https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-05/documents/hd_aa_asthma.pdf
- (3) Storms hit poorer people harder, from Superstorm Sandy to Hurricane Maria, by Chris Sellers, *The Conversation*, 19 Nov. 2017, <https://theconversation.com/storms-hit-poorer-people-harder-from-superstorm-sandy-to-hurricane-maria-87658>
- (4) Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*
- (5) *Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Tablet of Wisdom*
- (6) *Baha'u'llah, The Kitab-i-Aqdas*
- (7) *Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Words of Paradise, Sixth Leaf*
- (8) *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah CVII*

Global Climate Crisis: Seeking Solutions

Online Conference, 20 April 2020

Organized by the [Bahá'í Chair for World Peace](#), University of Maryland

The global climate crisis underscores the primary challenge facing the global community today. How to reduce the devastating human impact on the environment is the most vital issue that requires non-partisan, united action based on scientific evidence as well as a clear moral framework. The issue has profound implications for the common good of humanity. The negative impact of humanity on the ecosystem and the planet is clear to see.

A rapidly expanding and growing global population poses major challenges in how to justly balance the finite resources of the planet. Limited availability and inequitable distribution of the planet's resources significantly impact social relations both within and between nations, increasing the risk of conflict.

This conference brought together leading scholars from a diverse range of disciplines to discuss how we can come together to find solutions for the existential environmental threats facing the planet. By approaching the problem from different perspectives, the speakers addressed key questions surrounding the science, ethics, and implications of climate change.

See a report about the conference at Bahá'í World News Service:

[Pandemic highlights need to address moral dimensions of climate change, scholars warn](#)

You can watch the recorded conference with the links below:

Introduction

Prof. Hoda Mahmoudi, Bahá'í Chair for World Peace, University of Maryland

First Do No Harm: Climate Reparations and Guarantees of Non-Repetition

Prof. Maxine Burkett, Professor of Law, University of Hawai'i Manoa

Land's Potential for Limiting Climate Change Richard A. Houghton, Senior Scientist, Woods Hole Research Center, Massachusetts

Indigenous Energy Justice and the Climate Change Crisis

Dr. Kyle Powys Whyte, Timnick Chair and Professor of Philosophy, Michigan State University

People, Peace and the Environment: Engaging communities in environmental decision making

Dr. Melissa Nursey-Bray, Head of Geography, University of Adelaide, Australia

The Role of Science Boundary Organizations in informing regional decision making and policy

Dr. Victoria Keener, Research Fellow and Lead Principal Investigator of the Pacific Regional Integrated Sciences & Assessments (Pacific RISA) program, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawai'i

Discussion of the futures of water, energy and food nexus in Southeast Asia and anticipatory governance practices

Dr. Rathana Peou Norbert-Munns, Southeast Asia Regional Scenarios Coordinator, CCAFS, Australia

Closing Remarks

Prof. Hoda Mahmoudi

State of the World's Forests 2020

Urgent action is needed to safeguard the biodiversity of the world's forests amid alarming rates of deforestation and degradation, according to the latest edition of *The State of the World's Forests* released on the International Day for Biological Diversity (22 May). The 188-page report, which summarizes a decade of studies on biodiversity, examines the contributions of forests and of the populations that use and manage them. The report shows that the conservation of the world's biodiversity is utterly dependent on the way in which we interact with and use the world's forests. The report was produced by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in partnership, for the first time, with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and technical input from the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre.

Over the last 30 years, at least 420 million hectares of forest have been lost to land-use changes, mostly to agricultural development, or in some cases to wood production. However, the rate of deforestation has slowed in recent years, from around 16 million hectares per year in the 1990s to 10 million hectares per year over the last five years, but the mostly illegal practices of conversion to agriculture and other land uses or unsustainable levels of exploitation are persisting.

The COVID-19 crisis has thrown into sharp focus the importance of conserving biodiversity and sustainably using nature, recognizing that people's health is linked to ecosystem health. Although forests occupy less than a third of the world's land, they harbour most of the Earth's terrestrial biodiversity. The report shows that forests contain 60,000 different tree species, 80 percent of amphibian species, 75 percent of bird species, 68 percent of mammal species, and around 60 percent of all vascular plant species. The report presents a comprehensive overview of forest biodiversity, including world maps revealing where forests still hold rich communities of fauna and flora, such as the northern Andes and parts of the Congo Basin, and where they have been lost.

With the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration starting in 2021, and as countries consider a Global Biodiversity Framework for the future, there is a need for increased global cooperation to restore degraded and damaged ecosystems, combat climate change and safeguard biodiversity. This will require transformational change in the way in which we produce and consume food, conserving and managing forests and trees within an integrated landscape approach, and repairing the damage done through forest restoration efforts. In this report, a special study found 34.8 million patches of forests in the world, ranging in size from 1 hectare to 680 million hectares. Greater restoration efforts to reconnect forest fragments are urgently needed. The largest increase in protected forest areas occurred in broadleaved evergreen forests – such as those typically found in the tropics. Furthermore, over 30 percent of all tropical rainforests, subtropical dry forests and temperate oceanic forests are now located within protected areas.

Millions of people around the world depend on forests for their food security and livelihoods. Forests provide more than 86 million green jobs. Of those living in extreme poverty, over 90 percent are dependent on forests for wild food, firewood or part of their livelihoods. This number includes eight million extremely poor, forest-dependent people in Latin America alone.

To access the full report: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/ca8642en>
See also the online summary at: <http://www.fao.org/state-of-forests/2020/en/>

Sources: <https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-report-...>
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