



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](mailto:newsletter@ief.org). Please share the Leaves newsletter and IEF membership information with family, friends, and associates and encourage interested persons to consider becoming a member of the IEF.

**IEF Lecture Webinars**

**by IEF Member Khela Baskett, IEF webinar coordinator**

**5th IEF Lecture**

**Deforestation – Interconnected Causes and Solutions  
with natural resources economist Dr. Michael Richards**

**April 24th 2021**, 1pm EDT, 18:00 GMT (UK), 19:00 CET, 22:30 IST (New Delhi)

Register Here: [https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYrcOCvpzoiHtbYIA\\_gdCWMGGnzbtuOQYct](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYrcOCvpzoiHtbYIA_gdCWMGGnzbtuOQYct)

**Description:**

This talk presents a personal view of the causes of, and solutions to, tropical deforestation, reflecting my professional experience. Following a brief review of the environmental, social and economic importance of forests, I look at the main causes of deforestation and forest degradation, both the direct or immediate drivers and the underlying causes. Most of these are values or consumer education-related (e.g., illegal logging, governance of concession allocation, state or corporate land grabs, unsustainable food commodity supply chains, etc.) but some, for example, associated with poverty drivers, subsistence food and hydropower production, are more nuanced. I will then look at some of the main international strategies that have been promoted to counteract deforestation, including those linked to the Paris Agreement, and discuss why, while in some countries there have been temporary success stories, these have not proved sustainable due primarily to national and international political economy issues. The presentation particularly explores the 'win-win' potential of a 'rights-based' approach that involves supporting the land rights and forest management practices of forest-dependent communities, especially indigenous peoples. Another vital strategy is a carbon tax. But ultimately any effective and durable solution comes back to global governance and the values that underpin it.

**Speaker Bio:**

Dr Michael Richards is a natural resources economist with 40 years of experience in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The early years of his career were spent working on smallholder farming systems in Malawi, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Honduras and Ghana, mainly on UK government aid projects. Since the early 1990s his work for various international NGOs and UN agencies has focused on policy, social and institutional issues around the sustainable management and conservation of tropical forests, and with a particular focus on participatory forest management and planning, payments for ecosystem services, forest governance and trade. During the last decade this has been mainly in South and South-East Asia.

**Next Webinar:**

**May 22nd - UN World Food Programme in the Lake Chad Region with Ndeley Agbaw**

**Description & Registration:**

[https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlsduugqz8tG93WNNu2HE\\_weUO1mX2cdVNV](https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlsduugqz8tG93WNNu2HE_weUO1mX2cdVNV)

Last month's presentation, "**Discourse: A Baha'i Perspective**" with **Dr. Stephen Friberg** is now posted on the IEF webinar playlist: <https://tinyurl.com/7p09o73g>

**Video for Ethical Commitment to Protect Nature and its Biodiversity  
A Statement from the International Environment Forum, 1 March 2021**

In the last newsletter we printed the new statement on Biodiversity by the International Environment Forum. IEF member Gary Reusche used his creativity and technical savvy to create an introductory video (5:45) for it. We thank Gary for his beautiful work!

You can enjoy the video here: <https://vimeo.com/530296612>

To read the statement, go here: <https://www.iefworld.org/IEFbiodiversity>

**American Bahá'í Community and Needs of the Natural World  
Letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States  
12 March 2021**



*The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States has written to the American Bahá'í community calling for united action and universal participation in efforts to address climate change and other threats to the natural world. Of course, as with all such messages at the national level, they are directed at the specific conditions in a national Baha'i community, but they can inspire us to consider what is relevant in our own communities to put Bahá'í principles into action. The letter was accompanied by a compilation of quotations on [The Bahá'í Faith, Environment and Sustainable Development](#) available on the IEF website.*

March 12, 2021

To the American Bahá'í community

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

As we look ahead to our celebration of Naw-Rúz—the beginning of a new year and the start of the eagerly anticipated spring season—it is an opportune moment for us all to reflect on the needs of the natural world. Increasingly, the impacts of a changing climate are being felt both at home and abroad. A recent [analysis by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) describes some of the dire environmental stress we may witness in the near future.

While it is unlikely that the institutions of the Faith will make decisions regarding the application of technical solutions to climate change, they will, no doubt, contribute over time to the discourse on spiritual responses to its causes and its remediation. In that regard, the significance of the framework for action that the Bahá'í community has developed over years of experience should not be understated. As we know, by utilizing this framework to suffuse the principles of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh into communities across the country, localities will begin to take increasing responsibility for advancing their material and spiritual prosperity. One element of this increased sense of concern and volition may be a closer examination of the underlying forces that have driven the use of the Earth's resources and of how moral, or not, that use has been.

Inextricably tied to the implications of applying a moral framework to our use of the Earth's resources is participation. It is clear that tackling the pressing issues of our age—from climate change to economic inequality to racial prejudice—will require increasing levels of unity among individuals from all walks of life and involvement from all members of society.

As one contribution towards this process, the National Spiritual Assembly, through its Office of Public Affairs, has prepared a compilation exploring the intersection of the Faith, the environment, climate, and sustainable development. It can be found [here](#) and can be shared in your respective communities. The friends may also wish to consider taking the Wilmette Institute's course on Climate Change (April 8–June 2), or hosting an event to coincide with [Faith Climate Action Week](#), an annual initiative of Interfaith Power and Light, this year taking place April 16–25. Concurrently, April 22 is "Earth Day," which provides us all with the opportunity to participate in a variety of projects in support of the environment. We know the friends will be mindful that these endeavors are meant to enrich the work of community building—indeed, are essential to it—not compete with it.

The National Assembly hopes that these resources will be useful to you as you continue to bring the healing message of the Blessed Beauty to the communities in which you serve.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,  
Kenneth E. Bowers  
Secretary  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

**Science, Truth and Expert Advice**  
**Excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice**  
**Department of the Secretariat**  
**to an individual dated 11 February 2021**



One of the unfortunate features of the present age is the difficulty of attaining truth, which seems to be an inherent characteristic of the process of disintegration that is assailing humanity in its transition to a new order. "In these days truthfulness and sincerity are sorely afflicted in the clutches of falsehood," Bahá'u'lláh lamented, "and justice is tormented by the scourge of injustice." Of course, there are a number of Bahá'í teachings that directly bear on this dilemma. To the extent to which the friends imbibe and hold fast to these teachings, they can guard themselves and their communities from the tumult buffeting society and contribute to its protection and transformation.

The independent investigation of reality is a fundamental principle enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, through which, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained, "the world of humanity may be saved from the darkness of imitation and attain to the truth". In the Hidden Words, Bahá'u'lláh called the individual to observe justice, by whose aid "thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor." An essential method for the attainment of truth is consultation — "the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding."

Furthermore, the Bahá'í writings stress the importance of science. "Great indeed is the claim of scientists ... on the peoples of the world", Bahá'u'lláh observed. 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote that the "sciences of today are bridges to

reality” and repeatedly emphasized that “religion must be in conformity with science and reason”. Significantly, on an occasion when a scientific question was asked of Shoghi Effendi, he responded in a letter written on his behalf that “we are a religion and not qualified to pass on scientific matters”. And in reply to scientific issues raised on a number of occasions, he consistently advised Bahá’ís that such matters would need to be investigated by scientists.

In light of the foregoing, when faced with issues of a scientific or medical nature, Bahá’ís should seek out and rely on the best expert advice available. For example, in connection with medical matters, believers should bear in mind Bahá’u’lláh’s statement in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas: “Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause.” In relation to the coronavirus pandemic, the friends should follow the counsel of medical and other scientific experts on the advisability and efficacy of the various vaccination options that are becoming available and the wisdom of particular public health measures. They should not be concerned merely with their own personal choices and well-being, but in reaching their decisions, they should also consider their social responsibilities and the common good.

Of course, with a new outbreak of a previously unknown disease, available information may change rapidly. If an individual believer is unclear as to what may be reputable sources on a given issue, he or she may seek the recommendations of Bahá’í institutions or friends who have scientific training. In rare instances when experts appear to be providing inconsistent opinions, then one would do well to pursue the prevailing or majority expert opinion. Responding through his secretary to a believer who had received conflicting medical advice, Shoghi Effendi once advised: “you should refer to other doctors, and follow the majority vote.” It is scientific consensus arrived at through the sound methods of science, rather than a particular opinion from an individual expert, that should be sought. In this regard, there are reputable national and international health agencies created for the purpose of assessing circumstances that impact public health and well-being, and of determining what can be considered the established scientific consensus.

Through adherence to the above principles, Bahá’ís can offer a much-needed example of respect for science and truth. Yet, while these principles are straightforward and no doubt generally known to the friends, in recent years, the challenges associated with finding the truth pertaining to various issues in the wider society have grown more acute, creating greater opportunities for confusion and misdirection. In particular, one aspect of this breakdown that exacerbates the confusion is the systematic misuse of media and communication technologies — whether traditional or Internet-based. While the advancement of such technologies has had many positive effects and offers promise as yet unrealized, regrettably those same instrumentalities are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and too often can have socially destructive consequences. Through these vehicles, the uninformed, the self-interested, and the malicious can easily disseminate rumours, conspiracy theories, and outright falsehoods regarding just about any conceivable issue, including important scientific and medical ones. As these erroneous statements circulate and are repeated many times through different means, especially through social media — supported in some instances by isolated voices who may present themselves as experts — they take on the status of authoritative views in the minds of some. Information surrounding the current global pandemic is a prime example, with the consequences of such misinformation being potentially catastrophic. In the search for truth and understanding, the friends should therefore weed out those sources of information that prove to be biased and unreliable, which are attempting to offer unsubstantiated views for partisan purposes, in order to determine where consensus lies among reliable sources.

There, of course, remain scientific or medical matters about which experts have legitimate differences of opinion. Believers may, thus, come to various conclusions about such matters, and there is no obligation for the friends to have uniformity of thought about them. However, they should not allow differing opinions to become a point of contention among themselves and should act in ways that demonstrate their care for the welfare of others. If specific questions arise in relation to the activities of the Bahá’í community, the friends should turn for resolution to the institutions of the Faith.

## G20 Interfaith Forum



*The G20 Interfaith Forum, established to provide inputs from a faith perspective to meetings of the G20, has set up a Religion and Environment Working Group that is exploring how faith perspectives might improve the indicators used to measure progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. Two IEF board members, Victoria Thoresen and Arthur Dahl, are members of this Working Group that is preparing a policy paper on the topic. Arthur was asked to prepare a blog on the issue: "For Nature's Sake: A Moral Compass for the SDGs" that was published on the G20 Interfaith Forum website on 19 March.*

## For Nature's Sake: A Moral Compass for the SDGs

The pandemic of 2020-21 has dislocated the world economy, disrupted social relationships, and brought great death and suffering, emphasizing the importance of health and healing to our well-being. It has also made evident the need for healing many other causes of suffering in our world, including an economy that treats the environment, the climate, ecosystem services and natural resources as externalities that can be ignored because they are not valued as capital and traded in the market, leaving us to face existential threats to the future of civilization. That same economic system, focused on maximizing short-term profits, creates great financial wealth for some while extreme poverty persists and half the world population is still struggling to meet basic needs.

### A Framework for Sustainable Progress

Technological advances have transformed our world, and can easily be used to improve the common good and advance a sustainable civilization. However, they can just as easily be used to accelerate environmental destruction; to trap people in a consumer society relying on endless growth; to cultivate the basest aspects of human nature; and to invent new weapons of destruction. What is missing is an ethical dimension—a perspective that acknowledges there is a higher human purpose than just meeting material needs and desires; a moral compass that can give a positive direction to human society. This has traditionally been the role and purpose of the great faith traditions and of the world-views of Indigenous peoples.

The Sustainable Development Goals provide the accepted framework for the fundamental

transformation needed in human society to resolve the threats from climate change; biodiversity collapse; the rape of the planet's land, seas, and natural resources; and the economic deprivation and social fragmentation that marginalize and leave so many behind. The SDGs call for an integrated approach, since all these dimensions are part of an integrated biosphere, economy, and human system.

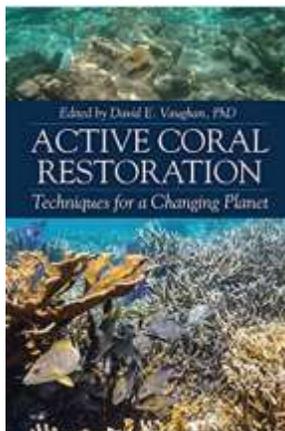
### The Fuel behind that Framework

But something more is needed: the motivation and political will to make the necessary changes in lifestyles, consumption patterns, energy sources, industrial processes, agricultural systems, economic paradigms, and institutions of governance.

Motivation comes from the heart—the domain of spirituality and faith, of altruism and self-sacrifice, of courage and patience, of love for humanity and nature. This is what the faith traditions contribute to the vision of the SDGs. Just as the SDGs have targets and indicators to measure progress and encourage effort, so do we need to develop complementary indicators of the values that motivate change and build unity in our diversity. The youth of the world need hope today more than ever, and their energy and idealism can be channelled through inspiring ethical principles and values to drive positive change and innovation as we build forward together. The G20 leaders should incorporate this dimension into their policy recommendations and encourage partnerships with religions, faith traditions, and Indigenous peoples as valuable allies in the healing of the world and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

The link to the original publication on the G20 Interfaith Forum website is here:  
<https://blog.g20interfaith.org/2021/03/19/for-natures-sake-a-moral-compass-for-the-sdgs/>

## **Active Coral Restoration: Techniques for a Changing Planet a new book**

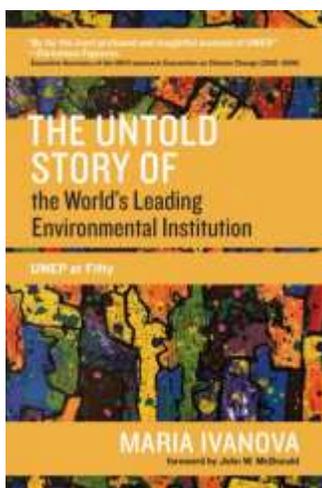


Coral reefs around the world are in peril and approximately half of the world's coral cover has been lost since 1970 due to impacts from climate change, pollution, disease, and fishing practices that can destroy entire reefs. This rate of decline has been quite rapid, particularly when compared to the average rate of growth for healthy coral in the wild. This ratio of decline to growth had diminished hope among scientists that coral reefs could eventually restore themselves over time. However, with the new technologies of active coral restoration, relative optimism has returned. Active coral restoration includes procedures for growing corals rapidly and efficiently, while also being able to select genetically for traits of natural resistance and resiliency that help them to survive water temperature increases, bleaching, and diseases. These cultured corals are grown in various types of nurseries and then outplanted to restoration sites. Until now, there has not been a book which showcases this marvelous, game-changing practice of active coral restoration.

[Active Coral Restoration: Techniques for a Changing Planet](#) provides a foundational understanding of the current and emerging practices and technologies used for active coral reef restoration projects around the world. The contributed chapters were written by some of the foremost authorities on coral reef restoration. A pioneer in this field is IEF member Austin Bowden-Kerby whose Kiritimati coral restoration site is included as Chapter 17. He has also initiated two other coral reef restoration projects that are featured in the book, one in Belize and the other one in the Dominican Republic.

*IEF congratulates Austin Bowden-Kerby for his life-long efforts for coral reef restoration and wishes all the projects featured in the book much success.*

## **Book Review of Maria Ivanova's The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty by Arthur Dahl**



For anyone interested in global environmental governance and how the world has faced up to the rapidly accelerating environmental challenges of the last half century, this book is the place to go. From the events leading up to the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, to the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and its location in Nairobi, Kenya, its leading role in addressing the hole in the ozone layer and emerging problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, chemical pollution, land degradation and many other global crises through advances in international environmental law, up to its present status and future prospects, this book is a thorough exploration of its successes and failures. It explains why UNEP was designed as it was, how its mandate has evolved between normative and operational expectations, what practical challenges it faced as the first UN institution located in a developing country, the personalities and impact of each of its Executive Directors, and what needs to be done now to address the interacting environmental challenges of a globalized world that has overshot planetary boundaries.

Professor Maria Ivanova, who heads the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts Boston, is uniquely placed to write such a book. She has interviewed hundreds of UNEP staff and other experts, including all the Executive Directors of UNEP, combining the academic perspective of a scholar with the practical realities of living and working in an international institution. In exploring why, despite 50 years of concentrated efforts, the global environment is still accelerating towards catastrophe, she demonstrates that the problem is not so much UNEP's mandate or structure but the larger forces of a world divided between East and West, North and South, and trapped in the paradigm of national sovereignty that places a country's narrow interests before the common good of all humankind. Since I have myself been part of that trajectory from the beginning, and was one of Maria's sources, I can vouch for the efforts she has gone to in presenting an analysis of the institution that is both insightful and useful as we consider the next steps forward in global governance. When I was put in charge of coordinating the UN System-wide Earthwatch after the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, I was moved from Nairobi to Geneva, since communications were so poor at UNEP's headquarters that it would have been impossible from there to collaborate with 50 parts of the UN system, the space agencies and the scientific community to create global observing systems, environmental assessment processes, and indicators of sustainable development.

It is clear that the present international system is full of pious declarations of intent and promises to rise to the occasion, but falls far short on performance. Governments are singularly untrustworthy, and there is no system to hold them to account or to sanction them for their failures. National sovereignty has become the screen behind which despots, autocrats, corrupt politicians and powerful vested interests hide their crimes from

any interference, and continue to rape and pillage the natural resources of the planet on which our future depends, not to mention the human rights of their populations. The hypocrisy of wealthy countries calling for international environmental action while fostering a neoliberal economy in which private profit and GDP growth were all-important and environmental and social impacts were "externalities", faced off against the developing countries afraid that any environmental controls would prevent them from profiting from their natural resources to rise out of poverty. It is no wonder that the environment came far down in priorities.

The core financial mechanism for UNEP, voluntary contributions, has been particularly vulnerable, preventing UNEP from meeting the ambitious goals that were set for it to be the environmental conscience of the UN system and the authoritative voice for environmental action. Its budget has become largely donor driven, reflecting donor priorities. Over the decades, global environmental governance has fragmented along sectoral issues: climate change, biodiversity, chemicals, ocean pollution and other issues, but UNEP is the only institution with a mandate to assess the whole planetary system in all its complexity, and could use its broad environmental assessment mandate, bridging science and policy, to inform the world of the dangers already unfolding and the necessary ways forward. We can only hope that books like this will give us the courage to rise to the occasion of the existential threats before us and, building on the lessons learned, to work for the breakthrough that is needed in global environmental governance.

Check out the book: Maria Ivanova. *The Untold Story of the World's Leading Environmental Institution: UNEP at Fifty*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2021. 329 pp.

## **Planting Hope, an Excellent Brief Documentary Recommended by IEF Member Paul Hanley**

"Planting hope" shows one of the fruits of the endeavours made by the Foundation for the Application and Teaching of Science (FUNDAEC) to contribute to the development of communities in the North of Cauca region in Colombia. Through the voices of those who participated in Fundaec's initial efforts in the 1970s, the documentary demonstrates how scientific thought, spiritual perceptions and traditional knowledge converge in a nurturing experience that elevates the potential that rests in the populations who reside in this region and opens the door to a new dimension of life in the countryside and to the resurgence of hope.



Watch the 22 min. video *Planting Hope* here:  
<https://www.bahaiblog.net/2021/03/planting-hope/>

**Our Planet, Our Future**  
**26-28 April 2021, Virtual Event**  
**Recommended by IEF Member Gary Colliver**

Our future depends on our collective ability to become effective stewards of the global commons – the climate, ice, land, ocean, freshwater, forests, soils and rich diversity of life.

The first Nobel Prize Summit brings together Nobel Prize laureates, scientists, policymakers, business leaders, and youth leaders to explore the question: What can be achieved in this decade to put the world on a path to a more sustainable, more prosperous future for all of humanity?

Across three days, the virtual event will combine keynotes and lively discussion with live performance and theatre. Speakers will explore solutions to some of humanity's greatest challenges: climate change and biodiversity loss, increasing inequality, and technological innovation in support of societal goals.

The summit will ask: what can we learn from our collective response to the global pandemic? And, how can societies distinguish facts from fiction in a new information ecosystem?

The Nobel Prize Summit is hosted by the Nobel Foundation and organised by the National Academy of Sciences in partnership with the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, and the Stockholm Resilience Centre/Beijer Institute.

For more information about the program and to register, go here: <https://www.nobelprize.org/events/nobel-prize-summit/2021/#tab-content/>



**Faith for Earth Achievement Report**  
**2020 – From Rising to Soaring**

Faith for Earth's annual [Achievement Report](#) for 2020 showcases Faith for Earth's further steps towards realising the [Strategy](#) for engaging with the faith community. We continued our journey with our partners at all levels and we have stepped up our partnerships



in a strive to make a better impact. More faith-based organizations have been accredited to UNEP, thousands have engaged in discussing UNEP's priorities and strategies, and faith leaders have engaged in policy dialogue and came together to emphasize their important role in driving sustainable development.

Source: [UN Environment Programme, 10 February 2021](#)



**World Bank**

Source: <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/sdgateas/>  
 The Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2020 presents an overview of the current state and trends for each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The user friendly and accessible information includes interactive storytelling and data visualizations.

The Atlas draws from the World Bank's [World Development Indicators](#) database, as well as from a wide variety of relevant data sources from scientists and other researchers worldwide.

On the [main page of the Atlas](#), you can click on any of the 17 SDGs and be presented with essential and up-dated facts and trends for this specific goal. Here are two examples with much shortened information:

When you click on [SDG 2 Zero Hunger - Beyond hunger: ensuring food security for all](#) you will learn the following:

- After declining for a decade, the undernourished population is now rising. In 2019, more than 690 million people experienced hunger—an increase of nearly 60 million in 5 years.
- Undernourishment is closely associated with severe food insecurity. Food insecurity manifests in different ways. These range from uncertainty around the ability to obtain food, to having to compromise on food quality and variety, to not eating for an entire day.
- Today, one in four persons around the world experiences moderate or severe food insecurity, and one in eleven experiences severe food insecurity. Most households that experience food insecurity—nearly 1.3 billion out of 2

billion—are in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

- Food insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa is staggering—more than half the population experiences it. Until 2018 the total number of people experiencing at least moderate food insecurity was highest in Sub-Saharan Africa. After 2019, South Asia overtook Sub-Saharan Africa.

When you click on [SDG 13 Climate Action - Floods, droughts and heat waves herald a changing climate](#), this is some of the information presented:

- The current global population is around 7.8 billion. By 2030 it will be around 8.5 billion. Everyone will experience the effects of climate change. But the effects will not be felt equally.
- From 2010 to 2019 more than 1.3 billion people were affected seriously enough by extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves, and cold waves to require emergency assistance.
- Over that period floods and droughts were responsible for the greatest human impacts.
- Climate change is expected to further increase the frequency and intensity of these events.
- Extreme weather events like these disproportionately affect people living in lower-middle-income and low-income countries.
- For example, in the last decade alone droughts and floods have affected an estimated 338 million people in India and 383 million people in China.

- Lower income countries are not only more vulnerable to adverse climate change impacts than higher income countries, but also less equipped to deal with them.

And this is some of the information when you click on [SDG 14 Life below Water - Marine species under threat](#):

- Fish are crucial to the functioning of ecosystems as well as for human livelihoods and nourishment. Marine fish are the primary food source for approximately 1 billion people and marine fisheries employ about 60 million people. But over the years, overfishing has left many fish stocks so depleted that they can no longer replace themselves. Currently, 35 percent of global fish stocks are overfished, a dramatic rise over the 10 percent levels of the 1990's.
- Fish and other aquatic species are particularly

vulnerable to threats from human activities, and aquatic species face much higher rates of extinction than terrestrial species such as birds and mammals. Today, 40 percent of amphibians, 30 percent of freshwater fish, and more than 30 percent of coral reefs and marine mammals are under threat.

- Destructive fishing, such as bottom trawling, can damage seafloor ecosystems and indiscriminately catch everything it encounters.
- Intensive shipping damages marine environments through the release of chemicals, transfer of invasive species, dumping of waste, and physical disturbances.
- Marine protected areas have shown to be an effective means of safeguarding vulnerable species and ecosystems, conserving biodiversity, re-establishing ecosystem integrity, instituting clear guidelines, and sheltering the feeding and breeding areas of marine species.

### **Plastic Is Creating an Environmental Justice Crisis**

Source: [Dharna Noor, 30 March 2021 in GIZMODO](#)

The world is producing more plastic than ever before as oil and gas firms focus on expanding plastic production in an attempt to stay in business. If the upward trend continues, plastic will account for 20% of the world's oil consumption by 2050.

According to the new analysis, the world produced more than 9 billion tons of new plastic from 1950 to 2015. Even more shockingly, more than 50% of all plastic in history was created in the last 18 years. At this rate of growth, the world is on track to produce 38 billion tons of plastic by 2025, which is enough to cover every foot of coastline on Earth with a layer of 100 plastic bags. Yet plastic production and pollution remain out of sight and out of mind in high-income communities, with the worst impacts foisted on people already suffering.

The study, released by the United Nations Environment Program and the environmental justice nonprofit Azul, shows that problems with plastic start long before it's thrown away. Every aspect of plastics' life cycle—from the extraction of raw materials and production to distribution and disposal—are threatening human health. At every stage, the report also explains, economically and socially disadvantaged groups, "including women, children, the poor, migrants and internally displaced people, indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities," are the most negatively affected.

### **The 2021 Water Development Report Explores Water's Value**

Source: [IISD, 22 March 2021](#)

"Recognizing, measuring and expressing water's worth, and incorporating it into decision-making, are fundamental to achieving sustainable and equitable water resources management." The 2021 World Water Development Report opens by identifying this challenge and proceeds to explore the need to broaden the notion of the "value" of water, stressing that we cannot confuse the concepts of "price," "cost," and "value."

The WWDR highlights that water is not like other raw materials that can be treated as commodities and openly traded through stock markets. The value of water for domestic use varies from the value placed on the human right to water, for example. These and other uses limit the application of traditional economic accounting for the value of water, as the recorded price of water often reflects attempts for cost recovery and not the value delivered.

## A Long Food Movement: Transforming Food Systems by 2045

Sources: IPES FOOD Website: <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/LongFoodMovement> and IPES FOOD Press Release <http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/LFMpressrelease>

30 March 2021 - The International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) has released a new report in collaboration with the ETC Group: 'A Long Food Movement: Transforming Food Systems by 2045'.

They mapped out two very different futures for food systems, people and the planet. First, what do the next 25 years have in store under “agribusiness-as-usual”? The keys of the food system are handed over to data platforms, private equity firms, and e-commerce giants, putting the food security of billions at the mercy of high-risk, AI-controlled farming systems, and accelerating environmental breakdown.

But what if the initiative is reclaimed by civil society and social movements - from grassroots organizations to international NGOs, from farmers' and fishers' groups to cooperatives and unions? We imagine what a 'Long Food Movement' could achieve by 2045 if these movements succeed in collaborating more closely – to transform financial flows, governance structures and food systems from the ground up.

The report lays out a series of strategies for a Long Food Movement to build sustainable food systems over the next 25 years. It estimates that, united, civil society could force a shift of up to USD 4 trillion from the industrial food chain to food sovereignty and agroecology. This includes USD 720 billion in subsidies going to big commodity production, and as much as USD 1.6 trillion in healthcare savings from a crackdown on junk food.

The sum total of these actions could cut 75% of food system emissions.

Some of the key strategies include:

- Diverting funds from major commodity subsidies, research expenditures and 'niche' budget lines to small-scale food producers.
- Supporting short supply chains and territorial markets: By 2045, as much as 50% of food would be sourced from local and regional supply chains. Up to 80% of wealthier populations go flexitarian.
  - Levying taxes on junk food, toxins, CO2 and the revenues of multinationals.
  - Adopting emergency food security measures that supersede trade and intellectual property rules.
  - Ensuring that famine, malnutrition, and environmental degradation are considered as criminal violations that can be internationally prosecuted.
  - Defending multilateralism by completing reforms of the UN Committee on World Food Security.

For more information and links to the report, go here:

<http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/LongFoodMovement>

For the executive summary, go here:

[http://www.ipes-food.org/\\_img/upload/files/LFMExecSummaryEN.pdf](http://www.ipes-food.org/_img/upload/files/LFMExecSummaryEN.pdf)

## Tenfold increase in CO2 emissions cuts needed to stem climate emergency

Source: [futureearth March 3, 2021](#)

New research shows 64 countries cut their fossil CO2 emissions during 2016-2019, but the rate of reduction needs to increase tenfold to meet the Paris Agreement aims to tackle climate change.

This first global stocktake by researchers at the University of East Anglia (UEA), Stanford University and the [Global Carbon Project](#) examined progress in cutting fossil CO2 emissions since the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015. Their results show the clear need for far greater ambition ahead of the important UN climate summit in Glasgow in November (COP26).

The annual cuts of 0.16 billion tonnes of CO2 are only 10 percent of the 1-2 billion tonnes of CO2 cuts that are needed globally every year to tackle climate change. While emissions decreased in 64 countries, they increased in 150 countries. Globally, emissions grew by 0.21 billion tonnes of CO2 per year during 2016-2019 compared to 2011-2015. The scientists' findings, 'Fossil CO2 emissions in the post-COVID era', are published today in [Nature Climate Change](#).

*The paper, 'Fossil CO2 emissions in the post-COVID era', was published March 3, 2021 in Nature Climate Change (link [here](#)).*