

Bahá'í Participation in Environmental Discourse

Participating in Public Discourse

Learning about the Bahá'í Faith

Bahá'í Class - Discourse2

Environmental Discourses

For almost a century, Bahá'ís have participated in discourses on the environment and have worked to protect nature in application of Bahá'í principles. We can learn from these examples.

Early action by Baha'is

- Richard St. Barbe Baker: Men of the Trees (Kenya, 1920's), reforestation in Palestine (1930s), redwoods in California, greening the Sahara, World Forestry Charter gatherings (1950s)
- Shoghi Effendi first life member of Men of the Trees (1930), messages to World Forestry Charter gatherings



Richard St. Barbe Baker, Nairobi 1953

Early discourse by Baha'is

- Vinson Brown nature guides 1940s---; Baha'i children's classes
- Willy Willoya and Vinson Brown, *Warriors of the Rainbow* 1962, first nations visions of unity (influenced Greenpeace)

Warriors of the Rainbow inspired founders of Greenpeace

ABOUT THIS BOOK AND ITS AUTHORS

An Indian who read this book said: "It makes me feel strange. It makes me proud of my people, but ashamed of my own life and wanting to improve it." A white man who read it said: "I never knew the Indians had such feeling; I never knew they had such strange and wonderful visions. That they tie all together into a meaningful pattern makes me think there is something behind them." Whether you are

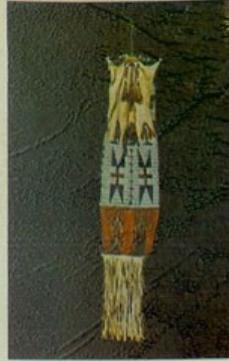


The Eskimo, William Willoya, was born and educated in Alaska, but has traveled in Europe and over much of North America, searching for the fulfillment of a wondrous dream. How he found it is part of the story.

Vinson Brown, author of fourteen publisher books, has his M.A. in biology from Stanford University, and has traveled to Asia, Central America, and over much of western North America. He has visited several Indian tribes and studied their thoughts, dreams and customs with understanding and love.

white, Indian or of any other race, you will find in this book a new and exciting way to look at life and a promise of glory and peace for all mankind.

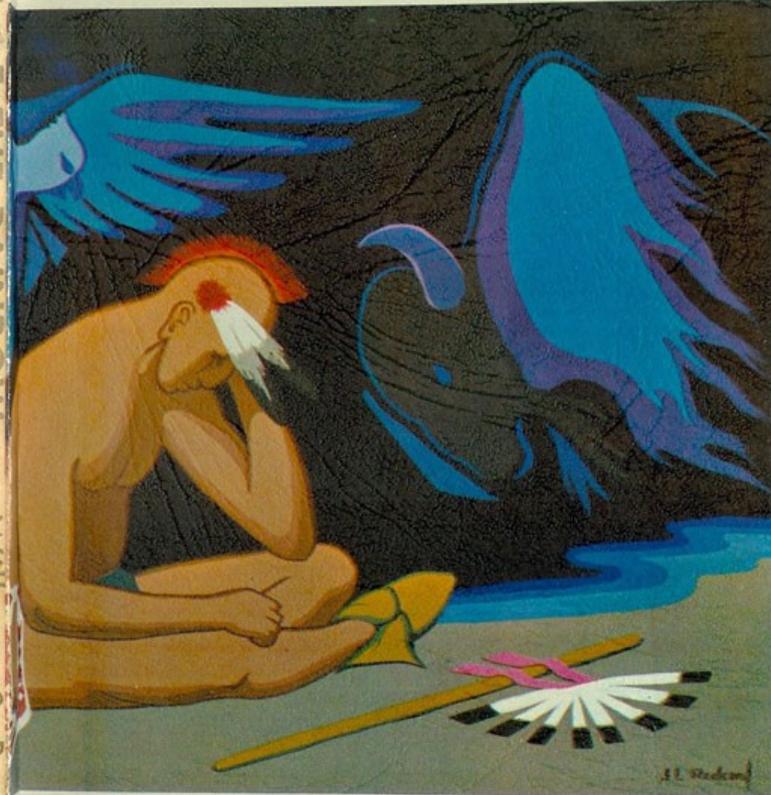
The Oglala Sioux beaded bag shown in the upper right is a unique key to this story, for somehow it started one of the remarkable visions told about in this book and it started an unusual partnership of an Eskimo and a white biologist in writing it.



WARRIORS OF THE RAINBOW

Strange and Prophetic Dreams of the Indian Peoples

WITH FOUR PAGES OF COLOR



William Willoya and Vinson Brown

WARRIORS OF THE RAINBOW - Willoya & Brown

Baha'i International
Community and
international
environmental
governance

UN Conference on the Human Environment Stockholm 1972



United Nations Conference on the Human Environment

First UN event on environment
Stockholm, 5-16 June 1972

113 countries, 19 agencies

Bahá'í International Community

one of 137 accredited

nongovernmental organizations

spoke at the conference



UN Conference on the Human Environment Stockholm 1972

↓ Iranian delegate Dr. Shapour Rassekh

Delegation of the Baha'i International Community ↓



UN Conference on the Human Environment Stockholm 1972 Brochure of the Baha'i International Community

those from less developed and more developed regions in service to the human race, Bahá'í communities are making a positive contribution in creating both a world unified in its diversity and an environment promising justice and fulfillment for the whole of mankind.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following selected references contain further information on the Bahá'í Teachings:

BAHÁ'Í WORLD FAITH, Selected Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 449 pp.

BAHÁ'U'LLÁH AND THE NEW ERA by J. E. Esslemont, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 301 pp. (also available in many translations).

FOUNDATIONS OF WORLD UNITY by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilmette, Illinois, Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 178 pp.

RENEWAL OF CIVILIZATION, THE by David Hofman, London, George Ronald, 96 pp.

Bahá'í International Community
345 East 46th Street
New York, New York 10017
United States of America

"In cycles gone by, though harmony was established, yet, owing to the absence of means, the unity of all mankind could not have been achieved. Continents remained widely divided, nay even among the peoples of one and the same continent association and interchange of thought were well-nigh impossible. Consequently intercourse, understanding and unity amongst all the peoples and kindreds of the earth were unattainable. In this day, however, means of communication have multiplied, and the five continents of the earth have virtually merged into one. . . . In like manner all the members of the human family, whether peoples or governments, cities or villages, have become increasingly interdependent. For none is self-sufficiency any longer possible, inasmuch as political ties unite all peoples and nations, and the bonds of trade and industry, of agriculture and education, are being strengthened every day. Hence the unity of all mankind can in this day be achieved. Verily this is none other but one of the wonders of this wondrous age, this glorious century. Of this past ages have been deprived, for this century — the century of light — has been endowed with unique and unprecedented glory, power and illumination. Hence the miraculous unfolding of a fresh marvel every day. Eventually it will be seen how bright its candles will burn in the assemblage of man."

— Bahá'í Writings

THE ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN VALUES

A Bahá'í View

"The earth is but one country and mankind its citizens."

— Bahá'u'lláh

"If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation."

— Bahá'u'lláh

UN Conference on the Human Environment Stockholm 1972 Brochure of the Baha'i International Community

THE BASIC ILLNESS

The obvious causes of our current environmental symptoms should not conceal the nature of the basic illness. No single analysis of the problem of the human environment has exposed the root of the difficulties facing the world today: that the social structures of the world and the systems of values on which they were built cannot meet the new human needs.

Man has developed a new relationship to both his natural environment and his fellow. The radical transformation of his physical environment by science and technology during the last century has given him the power to control and modify natural forces. It has eliminated physical barriers to world unity; but it has created at the same time complex and divisive social relationships. We are consequently allowed the alternatives of either regressing to a primitive level of technology, or fulfilling the potential of a united world.

To achieve the latter — a world civilization — we must recreate our societies and their values.

Aware of the interdependence of the major elements of the world ecosystem — an interdependence evident also at the social, economic, and political levels — we are beginning to see that integration of life on the planet requires unified action on a scale we have not yet achieved. Partial solutions seem only to prolong the difficulties; yet we hesitate to adopt a new and workable system of values for the world. For until there is unity at the most fundamental level — that of human values — social problems, simple or complex, will remain unresolved.

THE FOUNDATION OF HUMAN VALUES

Strangely, religion, which has traditionally been the area of human experience most centrally concerned with human values and the definition of man's

purpose, is seldom considered in the search for solutions to current world problems such as those of the human environment. Yet religion (in the broadest sense) has not been static: new teachers, new movements have come many times in human history, providing new social and cultural directions for man. The major religions in particular have succeeded, at least for a time, in unifying many disparate elements into a common social force based on a common set of values.

Today our need is similar. A lack of understanding or agreement between men at the most basic level — their goals and purposes — undermines attempts at comprehensive and long-range solutions to specific world problems, whether environmental, political, economic, or social.

Man's predicament was foreseen over 100 years ago by Bahá'u'lláh, a Persian exile and prisoner and Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Through His writings, which Bahá'ís believe have divine authority and power, He gave mankind a plan for achieving the human understanding and world order necessary to reform and unify human society. Many of the principles established by Bahá'u'lláh have immediate application to the problems of the human environment. In fact, the great majority of current world difficulties can be traced to our failure to observe the spiritual and moral standards and to apply the social concepts set down by Bahá'u'lláh, some of which are outlined below.

BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

An Ever-Advancing Civilization for all the peoples of the world with a reorientation to the quality of life that comes from an emphasis on spiritual values.

Harmony of Science and Religion, of material and spiritual values which deal with complementary aspects of man's needs.

Oneness of Mankind, involving the recognition that all men are brothers, and that prejudices of race, religion, class, sex, and nation must be abolished.

Unity in Diversity, accepting the differences among men and societies as assets, and uniting individuality with social responsibility.

World Order, including a world government representing all nations and peoples, capable of maintaining world peace and providing leadership for a world society.

A World Economy, with resources developed for the good of all, and an emphasis on renewable resources.

Social Justice, establishing equal rights and privileges for all people and the commitment of each individual to the welfare of his fellow man.

Universal Education for world understanding, based on the rational and independent investigation of truth, and leading to a sense of joint responsibility for the family of man.

Moderation in all things, including the material development of civilization.

As the people of the world are taught these principles and apply them in their daily lives, the imbalances in the human environment will diminish. The pattern is very simple and world-embracing, yet adaptable to the local needs and conditions of each region and people.

Already the world-wide Bahá'í community, including every major race, class, creed, and culture, and established in over 50,000 centers around the globe, is working to bring about this basic transformation in human values and understanding. Indeed, Bahá'ís today demonstrate the practicability of this approach. As the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh change the lives of people from all parts of the globe, uniting

EARTH SUMMIT

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

Rio de Janeiro, 1992



172 countries, 108 heads of state

2,400 non-governmental organizations

Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

Agenda 21 (action plan)

Conventions on climate change and biodiversity

BIC made statement at summit

International Environment Forum (IEF)

IEF is a Baha'i-inspired professional organization for environment and sustainability founded in 1997, with over 500 members in 90 countries. It is accredited by UN in the science/technology major group. It addresses:

- Interface of science and ethics
- Climate change and environmental sustainability
- Extremes of wealth and poverty, a just economy
- International environmental governance
- Gap between scientific urgency and political realism

It works for the fundamental systems change needed to transition to a sustainable society



BIC participation in Intergovernmental events

- Commission on Sustainable Development (annual review of Agenda 21)
- World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 2002
- UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), 2012
- UN High Level Political Forum
- Stockholm+50, 2022



World Summit on Sustainable Development Johannesburg 2002



Johannesburg Declaration
Plan of Implementation
Type II Partnerships (governments,
business, civil society)
BIC, IEF, ebbf all represented

Faith-based Events

World Summit on Religions and Conservation,
Windsor Castle, 29 April-4 May 1995

Ruhiyyih Khanum principal Bahá'í representative

Bahá'í International Community delegation

United Nations representative to present issues
to religious leaders: Arthur Dahl

<https://www.onecountry.org/story/religions-vow-new-alliance-conservation>



ARC Summit, Windsor Castle 1995

Faith-based Events

Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC)/UNDP religious seven-year action plans on climate change and the natural environment, presented on 2-4 November 2009 at Windsor Castle to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Prince Philip

<http://www.arcworld.org/>

ARC/UNDP. 2015. Faith in the Future: The Bristol Commitments; Faith Plans for a Sustainable Future

https://iefworld.org/bic_sdg

Windsor Celebration 2009



BIC Statement Climate Change

Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the Challenge of Climate Change (COP14 Poznan 2008)

- opportunity to take the next step in the transition from a state-centered mode of interacting on the world stage to one rooted in the unity which connects us as the inhabitants of one biosphere, the citizens of one world and the members of one human civilization. In the face of the destructive impacts of climate change – exacerbated by the extremes of wealth and poverty – need new approaches centered on the principles of justice and equity

(Bahá'í International Community. 2008)

BIC Statement Climate Change

- moral challenge which calls for the transformation of thoughts and behaviors so as to allow our economic and social structures to extend the benefits of development to all people
- view the climate change challenge through a new lens – one that perceives humanity as a unified whole, not unlike the cells of the human body, infinitely differentiated in form and function yet united in a common purpose which exceeds that of its component parts.

(Bahá'í International Community. 2008)

COP15 Copenhagen 2009



United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development



RIO United Nations
2012 Conference on
Sustainable
Development

Rio de Janeiro
20-22 June 2012

Green economy

Institutional arrangements for
sustainable development

Many opportunities for civil society
inputs including IEF

Rio+20 Rio Centro Conference Centre





Rio+20 session voted on proposal by IEF

Rio+20 Side Event - BIC

Elimination of Extremes of Wealth and Poverty





Rio+20 ICSU Science Forum
Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen on far right

Rio+20 - Peoples' Summit Bahá'í Community booth



Rio+20 - Peoples' Summit - IEF

Changing mentalities and motivations: values for the sustainability transition



UN Climate Change Conference

COP21

Paris, France
December 2015

International Environment Forum
<https://iefworld.org/cop21>



**TOUS ENSEMBLE
POUR LE CLIMAT**

cop21.gouv.fr #COP21

UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) Paris, December 2015



Bahá'í participation in COP21

- 2 accredited Bahá'í observers to the intergovernmental conference
- Statement from the Bahá'í International Community to the conference
- Bahá'í co-sponsorship and lead speaker at a side event on climate ethics
- 11 International Environment Forum participants supporting 3 side events in the Climate Generations area and 1 in the Netherlands pavilion



Part of the IEF team at COP21



SEDIF
SECTEUR PUBLIC DE L'EAU



FONTAINE JE BOIRAI DE TON
JUSTE DERRIERE CE P

THE GLASS HALF FULL OF
AND OUT ON THE OTHER SIDE

QUI DETRAS, AGUA

牌后, 甘

Community resilience in the face of climate-driven extreme events

A Vanuatu case study

Arthur Dahl, former Coordinator, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), and advisor to the Government of Vanuatu

Serik Tokbolat, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the United Nations, New York Office

Janot Mender de Suarez, Technical Advisor, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre

Temily Tavangar, University of Hong Kong



COP21 Climate Generations Area
5 December 2015





Ismael VELASCO
Director - Adora Foundation

Arthur DAHL
President - International Environment Forum

Janot MENDELER DE SUAREZ
Technical Advisor - Red Cross Red Crescent
Climate Centre

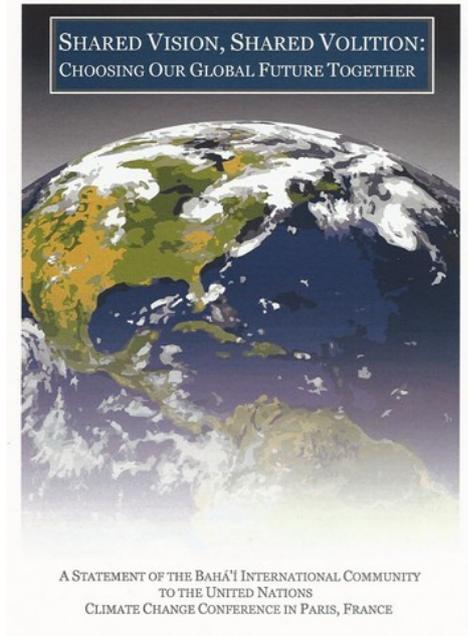
Arthur Dahl, International Environment Forum

Shared Vision, Shared Volition: Choosing Our Global Future Together

“COP21 can be understood as an opportunity to embrace more deeply the practical implications of the oneness of humanity.”

“...religious communities can be understood as communities of practice in which spiritual teachings are translated into social reality.”

“Ultimately it is individuals who take the initiative to adopt new patterns of action or continue with business as usual.”



Stockholm+50 International Meeting

1-5 June 2022 <https://iefworld.org/conf26>

- Global Environmental Governance: Ethical Foundations & Practical Proposals (BIC/IEF) in Swedish Parliament, 1 June 2022
- Global Systems Accounting Beyond Economics (IEF) 3 June 2022
- Empowering Local Sustainable Communities (IEF) 4 June 2022
- Intergenerational Perspectives on Visions for the Future (IEF) 5 June 2022

UN Stockholm+50 International Meeting BIC event in Swedish Parliament 1 June 2022



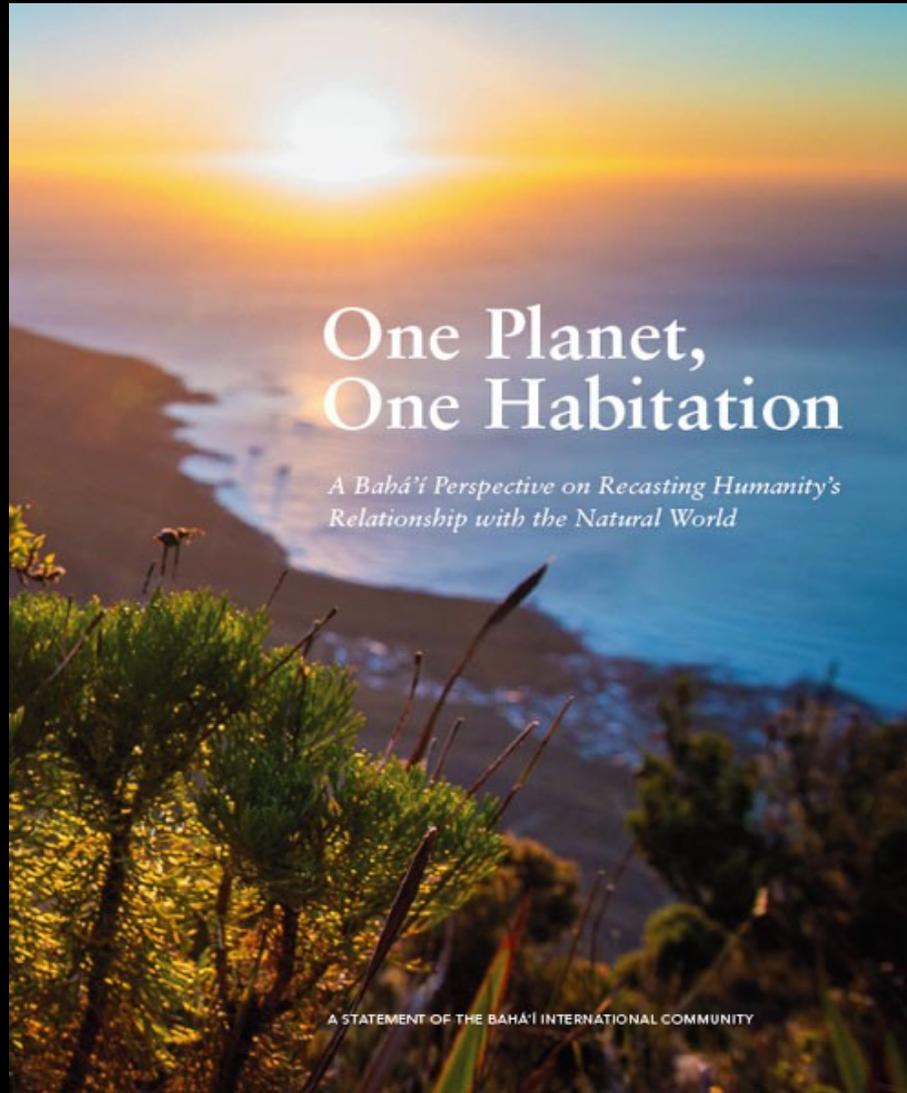
Daniel Perell, Augusto Lopez-Claros, Sylvia Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Peter Aburi
Anders Österberg, Mattias Vepsä (Swedish Members of Parliament)

UN Stockholm+50 International Meeting, June 2022



Bahá'í International Community delegation

UN Stockholm+50 International Meeting, June 2022



One Planet, One Habitation

*A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's
Relationship with the Natural World*

A STATEMENT OF THE BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY



UN Stockholm+50
International
Meeting
1 June 2022

Interfaith
Gathering

UN Stockholm+50 International Meeting June 2022



UN Stockholm+50 International Meeting, June 2022



UN Environment Management Group

Global Environmental Governance

- Stockholm+50 in June 2022
<https://iefworld.org/Stockholm50> and
<https://iefworld.org/conf26>
- Rethinking Global Systems Accounting to replace GDP as the primary measure of progress
<https://iefworld.org/accounting>
- Climate Governance Commission
<https://globalgovernanceforum.org/climate-governance-commission/>

Global Environmental Governance

An example of participation by Baha'is in public discourse

Report for the Climate Governance Commission

Referenced by the UN High Level Advisory Panel on Multilateral Governance 2023

https://iefworld.org/fl/dkarlsson_dahl21.pdf



Climate Governance Commission

Towards a Global Environment Agency Effective Governance for Shared Ecological Risks

SYLVIA KARLSSON-VINKHUYZEN AND ARTHUR LYON DAHL

Bahá'í International Community

Declarations on environment and sustainable development

1972 (UNCHE, Stockholm) The Environment and Human Values

1986 (WWF, Assisi) A Bahá'í Perspective on Nature and the Environment

1987 (WWF) A Bahá'í Declaration on Nature

1990 (UNCED PrepCom) Environment and Development

1991 (UNCED PrepComs):
Earth Charter
International Legislation for Environment and Development
Women and Men: Partnership for a Healthy Planet

1992 (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro) Sustainable Development and the Human Spirit

1993 (CSD1) World Citizenship: a Universal Ethic for Sustainable Development

1995 (WWF/ARC, Windsor) Conservation and Sustainable Development in the Bahá'í Faith

1995 (Social Summit, Copenhagen) The Prosperity of Humankind

1996 (Habitat II, Istanbul) Sustainable Communities in an Integrating World

1998 The Place and Importance of Spirituality in Development

1999 Who Is Writing the Future? Reflections on the Twentieth Century

2001 Science, Religion and Development: Some Initial Considerations

2001 (WSSD PrepCom) Sustainable Development: The Spiritual Dimension

2002 (WSSD, Johannesburg) Religion and Development at the Crossroads: Convergence or Divergence?

2005 The Search for Values in an Age of Transition

2008 Eradicating Poverty: Moving Forward As One

2008 (COP14, Posnan) Seizing the Opportunity: Redefining the Challenge of Climate Change

2009 (COP15, Copenhagen) Moral and Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change: Appeal to the World's Leaders

2009 (PNUD/ARC, Windsor) Bahá'í International Community's Seven-Year Plan of Action on Climate Change

2010 (CSD18) Rethinking Prosperity: Forging Alternatives to a Culture of Consumerism

Bahá'í International Community

Declarations on environment and sustainable development

2011 (UN Comm SocDev) Initial considerations regarding the elimination of the extremes of poverty and wealth

2011 (ARC Assisi) Green Pilgrimage Network

2012 (UNCSD Rio+20) Sustaining Societies: Towards a New 'We'

2012 (UN Comm SocDev) Empowerment as a Mechanism for Social Transformation

2012 (UN Inequalities) Beyond Balancing the Scales: The Roots of Equity, Justice and Prosperity for All

2014 (COP20) To the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Lima, Peru

2015 (ARC/UNDP SDGs) Baha'i International Community Engagement with the Sustainable Development Goals

2015 (UN SDGs) Summoning Our Common Will: A Baha'i Contribution to the United Nations Global Development Agenda

2015 (COP21) Shared Vision, Shared Volition: Choosing Our Global Future Together

2016 (Humanitarian Summit) Rising Together: Building the Capacity to Recover from Within

2017 (UN Comm SocDev) From Deficit to Abundance: Seeing Capacity for Meaningful Contribution in all Populations and People

2017 (UN Comm Women) Toward Prosperity: The Role of Women and Men in Building a Flourishing World Civilization

2018 (UN Comm SocDev) Towards a Just Economic Order: Conceptual Foundations and Moral Prerequisites

2018 (UN ECOSOC Youth) Rising Generations: Weaving a New Tapestry of Community Life

2018 (UN Comm Women) Beyond Mere Economics: A Moral Inquiry into the Roots of Empowerment

2018 (Global Compact Migration) Migration: A Chance to Reflect on Global Well-Being

2018 (Global Compact Migration) Viewing the movement of populations in the larger context of humanity's collective life

Bahá'í International Community

Declarations on environment and sustainable development

2019 Unity in Action: Reclaiming the Spirit of the Sustainable Development Agenda

2020 Beyond measure: The heart of humanity's crisis

A Governance Befitting: Humanity and the Path Toward a Just Global Order

2021 Reflections of Our Values: Digital Technologies and a Just Transition

'The First Active Agent in Human Society'

Putting Farmers at the Heart of Food Security Policy

2022 The Heart of Resilience: The Climate Crisis as a Catalyst for a Culture of Equality

One Planet, One Habitation: A Bahá'í Perspective on Recasting Humanity's Relationship with the Natural World

Towards a Sustainable Food System

Vers un système alimentaire durable

Hacia un Sistema Alimentario Sostenible

2023 Employment and Beyond: Drawing on the Capacities of All to Contribute to Society