



International Environment Forum

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Focal point: Arthur Lyon Dahl, President, dahla@bluewin.ch

Chapeau

As recommended by the High Level Advisory Board (Shift 2, Recommendation 4, p. 26), elevate the environment to the fourth pillar in the UN system alongside security, economic and social development, and human rights.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

- Transform the goal of the economic system from material wealth creation to human and environmental well-being.
- Social development should address inequality within and between countries to eliminate the extremes of poverty and wealth.
- Define human rights more broadly to include the seven fundamental human rights identified by the Secretary-General: to peace, to social and economic development, to a clean, healthy, sustainable environment, to cultural diversity, to gender equality, to civil and political rights, and the rights of future generations.
- Values of justice, equity, solidarity, and the oneness of humanity must be at the centre of United Nations action.
- Global United Nations funding mechanisms for global action should be created, including uniform taxation on the profits of multinational corporations, charges or taxation at the source on pollutants and persistent wastes including carbon taxes, a tax on international arms sales, and other disincentives for globally-damaging activities. Point source methane emissions can be detected from space and could be taxed accordingly.

Chapter II. International peace and security

Define the common good and security for all more broadly than military security and maintaining the peace, including global solidarity to reduce inequalities, sustainability of the planetary environment and its ecosystem services, and universal respect for human rights.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

1. Environmental governance should be based on the best available scientific consensus, which requires globally-coordinated environmental monitoring and data collection, projections and scenarios, and consensus assessment and reporting by independent entities at all levels, with assistance to build capacity in underserved regions. Scientific information should be freely accessible to all. In application of the principle of precaution, the lack of scientific certainty should not prevent regulation or prohibition of activities or substances likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Information about environmental damage or the likelihood of such damage should immediately and publicly be made available.

2. Create an independent, objective International Panel on Earth Science (referred to by HLAB as a Science-Policy-Action Network), bringing together experts from the natural and social sciences and other knowledge systems including Indigenous knowledge, which should prepare regular reports and assessments of the state of and changes in the Earth system and essential planetary boundaries, as the basis for legislation and management.

3. The Panel should coordinate the collection of data, provide an independent review and analysis of environmental parameters and trends, recommend the building of capacity in all countries to contribute to the science, and provide reports and recommendations for policy and decision-making.

4. Environmental data collection should be institutionalized and properly supported at the global level to ensure effective and transparent coverage of all countries and planetary systems, and to facilitate access by all users to scientific data.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

Establish an official representation for future generations at the United Nations to address the long-term implications of issues raised and decisions taken. This should be supported by a scientific capacity for long-term projections, modelling and scenario development.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance

- Global environmental governance must be strengthened to respond to the multiple global crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste that present ineffective governance measures have failed to resolve.

- Before an eventual revision or replacement of the UN Charter, the existing pillars of security and of economic and social development were extended to three in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Raising the environment to the fourth pillar could initially be accomplished by the similar adoption of a Declaration of Planetary Environmental Responsibility, along with expanded authority for UNEP and the UN Environment Assembly.

PRINCIPLES

1. The planetary environment upon which all life depends is a dynamic system that has evolved optimal conditions for all life and human well-being within planetary boundaries. These are now under threat from human activities that must be addressed collectively at the international level. The United Nations should ensure the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and long-term environmental sustainability for human and natural well-being.

2. United Nations responsibility for the planetary environment extends to those dimensions beyond the capacity of any nation to manage independently, while reserving to states their autonomy in choosing the most appropriate ways to respect their international responsibilities.

3. Protecting the Earth system requires an integrated systems approach to the balance, integrity and resilience of the biosphere and its ecosystem services over many generations, including governance of outer space, the electromagnetic spectrum, the atmosphere and climate system, the water cycle, the oceans, the biosphere and its ecosystems and genetic resources, the sustainable exploitation of natural resources, chemical pollution, wastes and their disposal, and the conditions necessary for human health and well-being.

4. Global environmental governance and the obligations and responsibilities derived from it should apply not only to states but to non-state actors including corporations, other institutions and individuals. In an integrated global system, all stakeholders stand to benefit from respecting the common good, and may contribute to global harm, so free-riding should not be tolerated. In accordance with the polluter-pays principle, prevention, mitigation and remediation costs for pollution, and other environmental disruptions and degradation should, to the greatest possible extent, be borne by their originator, including the original producer, investor or mandator and not just the user impacting the environment.

5. Effective environmental governance requires public participation by all stakeholders at an appropriate stage, to build public support for implementation. Environmental

education should be provided at all levels to inspire responsible conduct in protecting and improving the environment.

6. The Earth system is constantly changing and evolving both through natural processes and as the result of human impacts. Environmental governance needs to provide for processes of learning from these changes to maintain flexibility and to adapt legislation and institutions to a dynamic and constantly changing world.

For the scientific basis of environmental governance, see Chapter III above.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

1. Responsibility for the protection, management and sustainable use of the planetary environment and Earth System should be vested in a Global Environment Agency upgraded from UNEP, with the capacity to orchestrate and coordinate all the relevant specialized agencies and organizations to ensure the common good of all life on Earth.

2. The Agency would create a framework of global and regional institutions of environmental governance responsible for the implementation of planetary environmental legislation, while respecting national autonomy in applying each state's responsibility in ways appropriate to local conditions and capacities.

3. The existing specialized agencies, programmes, conventions and other bodies with environmental responsibilities, should all be brought into relationship with the United Nations, and gradually harmonized and incorporated into an efficient and coherent set of mechanisms to manage the various planetary environmental challenges.

4. An international funding mechanism should be established to ensure the proper functioning and implementation of global environmental governance. Such a mechanism could include taxes on environmentally damaging activities, fines for breaking global environmental regulations, and assessed contributions from states in proportion to their environmental responsibility and impact.

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY

1. The United Nations Environment Assembly with universal membership should be given the capacity to negotiate and approve binding legislation necessary to protect the essential functions of the planetary environment as the common good of all peoples, and to ensure that planetary boundaries as determined by science are not exceeded, or that human impacts are returned to levels consistent with those boundaries. The Assembly should also allocate responsibility for respecting those limits among states and other responsible actors in accordance with justice, equity and capacity for implementation.

2. The Assembly may adopt legislation that combines and increases coherence between the texts of existing conventions, multilateral agreements and international regulations, for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

3. Global environmental legislation should include the means of implementation, both within countries and beyond national jurisdictions. Where countries have insufficient capacity, assistance should be provided either to build that capacity within country or to establish regional or international collaboration and joint implementation.

INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT COURT

1. Access to environmental justice, including affordable access to administrative and judicial procedures, and to redress for environmental loss and damage, must be provided for at both the global and national levels.

2. An International Environmental Court, modelled on the procedures of the International Court of Justice, should have this competence to interpret legislation, resolve disputes and ensure access to environmental justice at the global level.

For further information, see Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen, Sylvia and Arthur Lyon Dahl. 2021. **[Towards a Global Environment Agency: Effective Governance for Shared Ecological Risks](https://iefworld.org/fl/dkarlsson_dahl21.pdf)**. A Climate Governance Commission Report. Stockholm: Global Challenges Foundation. 77 p. https://iefworld.org/fl/dkarlsson_dahl21.pdf

Submitted by
Arthur Lyon Dahl
President
International Environment Forum
12B Chemin de Maisonneuve
1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland
dahla@bluewin.ch