TOGETHER FIRST

A global system that works for all

Is organisation?	**Organisation?**	**Is organisation?**
Yes	Other	Yes
Short	**Positive multiplier**	**Short**

Global catastrophic risks mitigated	**Risk multipliers managed**	**Implementation timeframe**

DETAILS

Formulate and Coordinate Robust, Science-based Responses to Global, Catastrophic Risks, Science is the Foundation for Public Education, policy-making and action, requiring strengthening formal science-policy inputs to UN and government decision-making, while building public support for action as an ethical responsibility

The International Environment Forum is a Bahá'í-inspired professional organization for the environment and sustainability, founded in 1997 and now with over 400 members in more than 75 countries. IEF is a virtual organization that functions largely over the Internet, with an extensive web site (https://iefworld.org), a monthly newsletter, annual conferences somewhere in the world often in partnership with other organizations, and educational activities. It is accredited by the United Nations in the scientific and technological community major group, collaborating in relevant UN activities with the International Science Council and other organizations including ebbf-Ethical Business Building the Future, the Global Governance Forum, and the Bahá'í International Community. As such, it bridges the scientific community and the wider circle of non-governmental organizations. It has organized events at the Copenhagen and Paris Climate conferences and plans to be at Glasgow. It contributes to the public discourse on the role of science in addressing the multiple risks the world is now facing, and is open to collaborating with others.

As an organization predominantly of scientists, we see the importance of the science of complex systems and an integrated perspective on the multiple challenges facing the world, including the climate catastrophe, the biodiversity crisis, the degradation of natural resources and irresponsible approaches to pollution and wastes on the environmental side; inequality reflected in extremes of wealth and poverty, migration, fragmentation and extremism on the social side; and a materialistic economic system plundering the planet for the benefit of the few while leaving most of the population behind. We contributed to the formulation of the 2030 Agenda and actively support the SDGs. But scientific knowledge, by itself, does not change individual behaviour or guide system change. From our Bahá'í-inspired perspective, the ethical dimension of human values and a vision of a higher human purpose are required to motivate change and to accept short-term sacrifices for the long-term common good, learning to live within planetary boundaries. We see changing values as fundamental to progress, and scientific and ethical approaches as complementary. We need to create momentum from many stakeholders beyond the scientific community for a strong voice for science in UN reform and responding to the climate crisis.

For environmental risks such as the climate crisis and the collapse of biodiversity, natural science is the primary warning mechanism, but it still has too little impact on decision-making in the UN or on fundamental systems change as required by the 2030 Agenda. We need to work to change this. Two of our members shared in the 2018 New Shape Prize of the Global Challenges Foundation for their proposals on global governance, and many of our members are scientists working at the science-policy interface, so we can speak from experience. We also have an interest and experience in strengthening the role of science at the local level, building local responsibility, resilience and innovation.

The International Environment Forum proposes launching a campaign with Together First and others, with a major focus on the climate crisis, to strengthen the science-policy interface in the UN system with formal links to decision-making processes, in order to overcome the inertia of present governance mechanisms. This will also mean new efforts to explain the challenges and their ethical implications and to build public support for actions, including at the local level. Since the General Assembly can create subsidiary advisory bodies without approval required by the Permanent Members of the Security Council, we can try to build sufficient momentum among interested countries, and adequate public pressure, to strengthen scientific advisory bodies in the UN.

The main risk addressed is the failure of political processes at the national and global levels to listen to scientific

warnings about climate catastrophe, biodiversity collapse, pollution impacts and other environmental threats, and

[redacted] shows that all these risks are interlinked

and could lead to a complex catastrophe with major social and economic consequences as well. The interest

created in improved global governance during the UN 75th anniversary could create opportunities to push this issue

One specific issue addressed in this proposal is inequality in access to scientific information and to knowledge in

general. The abuse of the concept of intellectual property by large multinational scientific publishing houses and

other corporate interests for profit has resulted in the privatisation of the commons of scientific knowledge, so that

One need is to move from science as the source only of negative news and warnings of disaster to a source of

positive solutions and visions of the better world that can emerge from the necessary economic and social

transition. This can be coupled with ethical arguments around justice, equity, solidarity and moderation in lifestyles.

been a significant shift in public opinion in recent years, so further improvement in the next five years is certainly

Climate change governance, because of the urgency and impact of the climate crisis, as well as the strong and

inaction. We need to develop arguments that listening to science leads to better outcomes, and build momentum for

reform. Some countries are leading the way, and they will demonstrate that transformation is both possible and

beneficial. There has already been a significant shift in public opinion in recent years, so further improvement in the

next five years is certainly possible. The challenge is to channel that into institutional change at the global level, but

to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement and to negotiate their equitable distribution.

there are also positive proposals for this that can gain momentum.

For the IEF, as a small organization operating without funding, this will be implemented through:

These concepts are further developed in the attached pdf file and on our web site at https://iefworld.org/node/1023. In

- Information on our web site, newsletter and outreach to our members

our full proposal, we consider the role of science in governance, strengthening science in policy making, and how

- Participation in major events in partnership with others (ebbf-Ethical Business Building the Future, Together First,

these proposals fit into the larger effort to reinforce global governance through fundamental reforms to the United

Global Governance Forum, Baha'i International Community, etc), including at the United Nations and COP 26

Nations. We provide further details on the development of scientific advisory and technology assessment process at

- Contributions to our major group, the Scientific and Technological organizations, in collaboration with the

the UN, and consider broader issues of global environmental governance. The role of science in responding to the

International Science Council

climate crisis is developed as an example. Two other relevant issues discussed are education for transformation, and

- Preparation and distribution of statements on social media and in video clips

universal access to science.

- Contribution to on-line courses on climate change and other educational activities

- Empowering our members and others to take action in their local communities.

We can only do a small part of what is required, and welcome partnerships to extend these activities.