

How Global Governance Can Address Climate Change

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Imagine this – one of the world’s largest countries has a major outbreak of a dread disease, so its government orders a solution: every region of the country should treat the disease as it sees fit.

In some ways, that’s exactly what the world has done to address climate change – we’ve attempted to deal with a global problem using a fragmented nation-based approach.

Various countries have passed and implemented strict environmental laws – but not all countries. Some international treaties have been signed by most countries – but some have since pulled out, and most have not met their agreed-upon emissions goals, or even seriously tried to.

The world’s major contributors to the problem of climate change, the so-called “gross emitter” nations – China, the United States, India, the Russian Federation, and Japan – have adopted wildly varying approaches to the issue, without much coordination or agreement.

The main victims of climate change so far – the low-lying island nations and the world’s poorest and least powerful countries – have had little or no say in proposing or implementing solutions.

This all seems pretty backward, doesn’t it? In fact, it looks like a recipe for failure.

By now, most people understand that climate change represents one of the first truly global human problems. We’ve had world wars and other worldwide issues, but none of them has faced

all nations equally, or potentially impacted every person on the planet. This one does, or soon will. When CO2 and other greenhouse gas levels rise, our world heats up. That warming has begun, and the science shows it will continue and likely get much worse, unless we act. By “we,” the scientists say, they mean the entirety of the human species – all of us.

The Baha’i teachings have a recommendation:

Today the most remarkable favour of God centereth around union and harmony ... so that this unity and concord may be the cause of the promulgation of the oneness of the world of humanity, may emancipate the world from this intense darkness of enmity and rancour, and that the Sun of Truth may shine in full and perfect effulgence.

Consider this: a global problem, by definition, requires a global solution. No purely local, regional or national solution can ever solve the world-encircling conundrum of climate change. Since everyone on Earth breathes the same air, and since the Earth’s atmosphere knows no national boundaries or borders, we must deal with the challenge of global warming in a global way. No unenforceable voluntary treaty among some number of nations will ever suffice. No single country can ever dictate policy to all other countries. No existing political system of governance could conceivably impose its will on all other systems.



We have reached a tipping point in human evolution, when our planetary problems have outstripped the abilities of our limited and localized governance structures. We’ve restricted and constrained our collective potential for action by trying to fight 21st century battles with 18th century weapons.

Obviously, then, we need a system of global governance – a federation of nations who have agreed to cede some of their sovereignty and decision-making ability to a parliament that speaks for all people:

... the Supreme Tribunal which Baha'u'llah has described will fulfil this sacred task with the utmost might and power. And His plan is this: that the national assemblies of each country and nation – that is to say parliaments – should elect two or three persons who are the choicest of that nation, and are well informed concerning international laws and the relations between governments and aware of the essential needs of the world of humanity in this day. The number of these representatives should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of that country. ... From among these people the members of the Supreme Tribunal will be elected, and all mankind will thus have a share therein, for every one of these delegates is fully representative of his nation. When the Supreme Tribunal gives a ruling on any international question, either unanimously or by majority rule, there will no longer be any pretext for the plaintiff or ground of objection for the defendant. In case any of the governments or nations, in the execution of the irrefutable decision of the Supreme Tribunal, be negligent or dilatory, the rest of the nations will rise up against it, because all the governments and nations of the world are the supporters of this Supreme Tribunal. Consider what a firm foundation this is! – Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*

In other words, humanity desperately needs a representative body whose responsibility includes the entire planet. To protect and preserve the Earth's fragile environment, which all life depends on, we must have a global governance system prepared to thoughtfully, carefully and scientifically oversee, regulate and limit the use of our natural resources. Today, no one group has that purview, which means that the planet itself lacks advocates who can effectively protect it, legislate for it, and hold it in trust for future generations of our progeny. The Baha'i teachings call for the establishment of a world government, and say that only global unity can solve our global issues:

... therein lie the welfare, security and true interests of all men; otherwise the earth will be tormented by a fresh calamity every day and unprecedented commotions will break out. God grant that the people of the world may be graciously aided to preserve the light of His loving counsels within the globe of wisdom. We cherish the hope that everyone may be adorned with the vesture of true wisdom, the basis of the government of the world. What could possibly be more important?

Only one grassroots group of millions of people in every part of the planet now works toward that goal of global governance: the worldwide Baha'i community. If you'd like to see an effective world parliament emerge, and believe, as Baha'is do, that world unity and a world federation of nations offer humanity the best possible chance for dealing with climate change, please join us.