

10th April 2017

PROPOSAL for a

Universal Declaration of Responsibility in an Interdependent World

Preamble

The scope of the interdependences among human beings, societies, and between humankind and the biosphere creates a community of destiny that calls for a new dimensions of integration at all scales.

In the current situation of Climate change, inequity between people, biodiversity loss, pressures on freshwater, oceans becoming acidified, calls for turning to new aspirations for lifestyles and development. The trend to limit human responsibilities and ignore the impact of the over exploitation of nature, fossil fuel emissions and exploitation of people, is driven by unaccountability for the use of nature's resources and accumulation of wealth is incompatible with harmony amongst societies, with preservation of the integrity of the planet, and with safekeeping the interests of future generations;

While all of us have a role in the change, the scope of change necessary to transition to responsible societies requires the involvement of all public or private institutions;

The current legal, political and financial procedures designed to steer and monitor public and private institutions, in particular those that have an impact worldwide, need to be transformed to strengthen provisions for public good and ensure responsibility and safeguards for social and environmental wellbeing. Current procedures undermine the assumption of full responsibilities, and may encourage their irresponsibility. Awareness of our shared responsibilities to the planet is a condition for the survival and progress of humankind;

Our shared responsibility is to preserve planet earth and the integrity of her ecosystems by preventing destruction from ecological and social disasters that will affect all the peoples of the Earth,

Consideration of the interests of others and of the community, and reciprocity among its members are the foundations of mutual trust, security, and respect of each person's dignity and of justice;

The pursuit of universal rights are not sufficient to adjust our behaviour, or to amend irresponsibility and therefore need corresponding responsibilities to guarantee the conditions of their application. Effective transitions to responsible societies means operationalizing rights, as well as developing social and legal frameworks of responsibility to restore the relationship of humanity with the planet, to develop environmentally and socially accountable economies, and create effective solidarity with those put at risk by the distortions of profit and power at the expense of sustainability and public good.

This situation requires the adoption of common ethical principles as inspiration for our behaviour and for the rules of society.

The following principles provide for a Universal Declaration of Interdependence and Responsibility:

Principles of Universal Interdependence and Responsibility

1. Responsibility is the foundation of community. The exercise of one's responsibilities expresses our human freedom and dignity as a citizen of the world community.
2. Individual human beings and everyone together have a shared responsibility to others, to close and distant communities, and to the planet. Human responsibility is generally proportionate to power, resources and knowledge. Human responsibility includes an orientation to public good and planetary stewardship. As an ethical principle responsibility includes relational and accountability dimensions and also has a quality of transcendence - a quality that exceeds the confines of law and liability, and encompasses spirituality.
3. Responsibility involves taking into account the immediate or deferred effects of all acts, preventing or offsetting their damages whether or not they were perpetrated voluntarily, and inclusive of effects on subjects of law, all biota and ecosystems. It applies to all fields of human activity and to all scales of time and space.
4. Responsibility requires systematic, legal means that can be applied across borders, to prevent irreversible damage. Responsibility to prevent irreversible damage is enduring; it is imprescriptible (cannot be absolved, or taken away).
5. Freedom of scientific research implies being guided by ethical criteria such as enhancement of biodiversity, respect for human dignity and non-human forms of life, and regard for the limitations of human knowledge.
6. The responsibility of institutions, public and private ones alike, whatever their governing rules, includes accountability for public good and the wellbeing of people and the health of ecosystems. The responsibility of leaders of public and private institutions is not exonerated by narrow or exclusive requirements of monetary profit.
7. The possession or enjoyment of a natural resource induces responsibility to manage it to the best of the common good.
8. In reaching decisions about short-term priorities, evaluation of long-term consequences must concur with ethical priorities of justice and inter- generational environmental stewardship, taking into account both risks and uncertainties.
9. The full potential of knowledge and is achieved through valuing different knowledge systems and ways of knowing, including indigenous knowledge, sharing them, and applying them in the service of unifying solidarity and a pluralistic culture of peace.
10. The exercise of power is legitimate where it serves the common good, and if it is accountable to those over whom it is exercised. The exercise of power and authority comes with rules of responsibility that measure up to the power of influence being exercised.
11. Responsibility includes the effort of uniting with others, and making the effort to become informed, even if circumstances are adverse to action.
