

# **Constituent Charter of the Alliance for Responsible and Sustainable Societies (AR21)**

## **1. Origins of the Alliance**

The Alliance was founded in 2014 by the most active members of the Forum of Ethics and Responsibilities, itself having stemmed from the Alliance for a Responsible and United World and from its efforts, during the last decade of the twentieth century, in identifying common values to underpin the management of interdependences among human beings, among societies, and between humanity and the biosphere. The conclusion at the outcome of in-depth cross-cultural and interreligious work was that responsibility would be the backbone of this common ethics. The founders of the Alliance for Responsible and Sustainable Societies have taken up the torch since 2003, initially to check whether the ethics of responsibility resonated within the greatest variety of societies and socio-professional networks, then to promote its implementation at every level and in all fields.

## **2. Orientations of the Alliance**

An alliance is a collective living body, empowered and vitalized from the value-added contributions of each of the allies, according to his/her competencies, networks, and commitments.

The contributions of allies have impact if they come from the heart, from a spirit of enthusiasm, from willingness to share knowledge and networks, and personal feelings of respect, trust, and generosity. These qualities indicate personal capacity to bring substantial value added, in accordance with the purpose of “placing responsibility at the core of sustainable societies.”

A further distinctive feature of an Alliance is that *all the personal capacities are given equal value and respect*: one member is good for writing and conceptualization, another speaks many languages, another has a good convening power, another one good connections with a specific stakeholder, another one connection with the media. The secret of an alliance is to use all these competencies for the sake of the common goal and the common good.

One of the roles of the Steering Committee/Advisory Council is to take account of strategic multi-annual agreed priorities and to propose one priority each year, which is “at hand” and relevant to responsibility and sustainable societies, and which will bring the opportunity to create and enhance synergies among allies.

A concern about focusing on a single priority is the risk that allies may feel they have neither the competence or personal will to contribute, and that such a priority may divert them from their own agenda, or expertise, or commitments, for the sake of moving to a particular priority.

## **3. Findings: the idea of responsibility is universal and responds to the crises in relations characterizing the current world**

1. The scope and irreversibility of the interdependences that have been generated among human beings, among societies, and between humankind and the biosphere constitute a radically new situation in the history of humankind, which has changed it irrevocably into a community of destiny, but neither international relations or economic rules, or education, or the current legal systems allow moving from this

reality to the emergence of a true world community in which every member is motivated to assume responsibility for the impact of his or her action on the other members of the community and on the planet.

2. Continuing the current form of development – which is based on the massive use of nonrenewable natural resources, energy resources in particular, exalts individualism and competition, turns common goods into commodities, and does not partner with actors to serve the common good – is incompatible with social harmony, and with safeguarding the integrity of the planet and the interests of future generations.
3. The scope of the changes now needed to build a viable planet, starting with implementing a universal ethics of responsibility, is out of the range of each of us and of individual institutions no matter how powerful they may seem, and this requires that all people and all public or private institutions become involved in these necessary changes and cooperate to produce them.
4. Awareness of our shared responsibilities to societies and to the planet is a requisite for humankind's survival and progress. It is therefore vital and urgent to promote this awareness, which means targeting both adults and youth.
5. Our societies and institutions, by giving responsibility a narrow definition limited to national communities or to the immediate, direct, and measurable effects of their actions with no regard for global interdependences and the long-term, often irreversible impact of our acts, as shown by climate change or the destruction of biodiversity, have set up the conditions for their unlimited irresponsibility. Governance and the economy do not encourage taking interdependences and responsible behavior into account. Moreover, the education systems inherited from the past and designed to respond to the challenges of their times are not suited for promoting responsibility and a responsible global, solidarity-based citizenship. Our societies, suffering from an inertia shared by all major conceptual and institutional systems, tend to hide from the extent and the urgency of the changes to be made. They are often better equipped to accommodate technological innovations, which they assimilate with progress and which continue to keep the economic machine running, than to design and implement the necessary structural changes in governance, the economy, international relations, and education.
6. In the past twenty years, awareness of the importance of responsibility has made indisputable progress among individuals, whose concern to make behavior and values consistent is increasing; among institutions, who are producing more and more ethical charters and committing voluntarily to social and environmental responsibility; in education, through which youth is being made aware of its future responsibilities; and among judges, who are integrating into their rulings a larger definition of responsibility. The wealth of this proliferation makes it possible to distinguish the systems to be promoted and the obstacles to be overcome. So far, however, these initiatives have remained fragmented and do not measure up to the necessary changes.
7. Since the first international conference on the environment in Stockholm in 1972, and notably since the 1992 Earth Summit with its blossoming of Earth Charter projects, the idea that as a complement to the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights the international community needs a third pillar that deals with interdependences among societies and between humankind and the biosphere and is apt to constitute the basis for future international law, has always been present and has

set off many initiatives. None of the projects, however, whether the Earth Charter, the Declaration of Interdependence, the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities, or any other, has been able to overcome the resistance of states bent on the idea of their sovereignty and not willing to be subjected to an international law that could condemn their actions. This resistance means that we need to persist in this ambition and take any international meeting as an opportunity to affirm and promote it, but not by making it a prerequisite to any progress of the right of responsibility, and by continuing to promote the universal principle for responsibility in many different ways.

### **3. Alliance Goals:**

1. *to be a place of convergence and mutual reinforcement* for all institutions and all persons who share the conviction that responsibility is at the core of the ethics of the twenty-first century;
2. *to promote the adoption by the international community of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities*, the project of which has been worked out by the Alliance, in particular in its requirement to do so at meetings on the international agenda;
3. *to promote responsibility at three levels*: that of individual ethics; that of the standards of collective behavior specific to each socio-professional sphere and to each institution; and that of the political and legal rules that place responsibility at the core of law and governance;
4. *to help connect, circulate, highlight and evaluate the many existing experiences*, without trying to replace them or to federate the many existing movements, each of which has its own identity. This connection effort applies, among others, to: initiatives promoting a third pillar for the international community; commitments by institutions to assume their social and environmental responsibilities; socio-professional alliances wishing to promote the principles and conditions of their members' exercising responsibility; the national and supranational rules of law leading persons, and public and private institutions to assume responsibility for their actions; reforms of the education system aimed at promoting responsible behavior and world citizenship;
5. *to promote proposals for reform* in the fields of law, education, the economy, local to global governance, based in particular on concrete challenges such as climate change, taxation, the legal status of companies, enlargement of the concept of the responsibility of actors (sphere of influence, duty to be vigilant);
6. *to be a resource center* freely available to all actors, where everyone's thoughts and experiences can be found along with teaching aids to promote the practice of responsibility at different levels and in different contexts, with particular attention to linking the approaches developed in socio-professional and intellectual spheres that are often unaware of one other.

### **4. Alliance Ethics**

1. The Alliance shall not replace the networks, movements, and institutions devoted to promoting responsibility. It wishes to be a forum where there can be sharing in a context of mutual respect, transparency and simplicity, where everyone can leave their institutional role and share their insights, doubts, and discoveries.
2. By placing the priority on the lessons of the many experiences and possibly draw from these some common guiding principles, the Alliance wishes to be able to strengthen the credibility, the relevance and the audience of innovators.

3. The Alliance, in particular in its analysis of the past and the present, never aims to pass judgment on persons or institutions, to give good or bad marks. A critical analysis of the past or of the current situation is intended only to gain better understanding of the obstacles to change, not to question in any way the good faith or the competence of the actors in place, and to draw prospects for the future.
4. The Alliance does not aim to build coalitions against third parties. It wishes to be pluralistic, to welcome the experiences of actors from all professional walks of life and many different philosophical, religious, or political convictions, as long as the dialog is based on personal reflections and not on institutional positions and is governed by good faith and real concern to move forward together toward the common goal. For this purpose, the Alliance does not exclude confidentiality from certain dialogs.
5. The Alliance does not claim to promote “the” good model of a Constitution, of an ethical charter, of a socio-professional alliance devoted to promoting responsibility, of an education system, of economic development, or of national and international law. It is however based on the idea that diversity itself is what makes it possible to draw guiding principles that will be useful to all.

## **5. Working Procedures**

1. The founders are guarantors of the spirit of the Alliance as defined in its Constituent Charter. The group comprises the following founders, present at the La Bergerie meeting: Edith Sizoo, Pierre Calame, Betsan Martin, Yolanda Ziaka, Sudha Reddy, Pinky Cupino, Isis de Palma, Ben Quiñones, Pierre Caro, Nina Gregg, Cristina Reynals, Thierry Westhaupt, Patrick Hébert, Christoph Stückelberger/Globethics, Nadia Gianoli, and Ricardo Jiménez. Further contributors at the origin were Marina Urquidi, Hendrik Opdebeeck, Madhavi Singh.
2. The group of founders shall not direct the development of the Alliance; it is guarantor of its goals and its ethics. It will meet, face-to-face or through the Internet, if a matter is submitted to it by any of its members or an ally regarding the Alliance’s moving away from its goals and its ethics, and will decide by simple majority whether this is true and if so, how serious it is. It will make recommendations and can decide to withdraw from those who speak for the Alliance their status as ally and their authorization to use the name and the logo of the Alliance. In case of resignation or decease of one of the founding members and if the group is reduced to fewer than seven members, the group will be renewed through cooption by two-thirds majority.
3. An ally is any person, institution, network, or alliance who endorses the present Constituent Charter and agrees to appear as such on the Alliance Web site.
4. The force of the Alliance stems from its members’ activity, their competences, their personal involvement, the networks they have been able to constitute or share throughout the years, the credibility each has acquired through their ethical rigor, their experience, their spirit of cooperation, and their power of proposal. Power within the Alliance stems for everyone from the added value that he or she brings and not from any statutory position within the collective.
5. The Alliance will not seek a legal personality. Respons, an organization under New Zealand law, has agreed to take charge of the Alliance’s operational secretariat for the

period covering 2015-2017. It is up to all the members of the Alliance to contribute to seeking financial means for its operations and development.

6. The allies have appointed a Steering Committee for two years to coordinate the allies' actions, to propose specific methods to implement the strategy, to manage and develop working tools, to distribute funds for jobs of common interest and projects involving several allies from the support allocated to the Alliance as a whole, notably by the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind for 2015-2017. In the Steering Committee decisions will be made by simple majority. The Steering Committee will take care to include, in whatever forms seem best adapted, the whole of the allies in its decisions, it having been observed that decisions that do not reflect the allies' aspirations and capacities and are not perceived as useful for the development of the Alliance will have a very limited reach.
7. All those who identify with the Alliance and speak in its name accept the following working discipline:
  - They will write up their own experience to feed a resource Web site: proposal and discussion papers, case sheets.
  - They will share their networks to strengthen the social capital and the visibility of the Alliance.
  - They will study an ally's collaboration proposal carefully.
  - They will participate in the common events decided by the Steering Committee, on condition that they have been involved in the decision making.
  - They will contribute to disseminating the work and proposals of the Alliance and as far as possible to translating it into different languages.
  - They will participate in a discussion list, making sure not to divert discussions with tangent debates or information of minor interest to the whole of the allies.
  - They will participate every year, in the fall, in an e-debate to make an assessment of the progress and the obstacles.
  - They will contribute to the extension of the Alliance, in particular by seeking new allies, and set up geographical chapters for allies from the same area, or new socio-professional alliances.

Repeated non-compliance with this working discipline places de facto any institution, person, or network outside of the present Alliance.