

Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities

Preamble

We, Representatives of the Member States of the United Nations

Recognize:

- 1- that the interdependent relationship that has been created between human beings, between societies, and between humankind and the biosphere, is irreversible and of an unprecedented scope. It constitutes a radically new situation in the history of humanity, irrevocably uniting our communities as a single community of destiny.
- 2- that the perpetuation of our current lifestyles and development models, along with the tendency to minimise one's own responsibilities, is incompatible with building harmony between societies, preserving the earth's ecological integrity and safeguarding the interests of future generations;
- 3- that the extent of changes now needed is beyond any single human being, and requires the commitment of each and every individual and every public and private institution;
- 4- that the current legal, political and financial procedures designed to steer and monitor public and private institutions, in particular those that have an impact worldwide, fail to motivate the latter to assume their full responsibilities, and may even encourage their irresponsibility;
- 5- that awareness of our individual and collective responsibilities towards the earth is crucial to the survival and progress of humankind;
- 6- that our collective responsibility, beyond the legitimate interests of our peoples, is to preserve our fragile planet and only home by preventing climate-related ecological and social disasters that will affect all the world's peoples,
- 7- that consideration for the interests of others and for the community, and reciprocity among its members are the basis for mutual trust, security, justice and respect for the dignity of each individual;
- 8- that proclaiming and pursuing universal rights is not enough to change our behaviour, as rights are ineffective when there is no institution equipped to ensure these rights are respected;
- 9- that these facts require adopting common ethical principles on which to base the conduct and rules of our leaders, as well as those of our peoples.

In the name of our peoples, we undertake to adopt the Universal Declaration of Universal Responsibilities. This Declaration will serve as a pillar for institutional and legal development and will constitute a reference for our behaviour and our relations. The Declaration may be promoted among all sectors of society, integrated into our values, decisions and practices, and provide the basis for further development of national and international law.

Principles of Universal Responsibility

Principle 1. All human beings are 'endowed with reason and conscience', as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, making them responsible for others, for communities near and far, and for the earth, each according to one's power.

Principle 2. The exercise of power, however it may be acquired, is legitimate only if the said power is accountable for his/her actions to those over whom this power is exercised and if it goes together with rules of responsibility that measure up to the power of influence being exercised.

Principle 3. Such responsibility involves taking into account the immediate or deferred effects of all acts, preventing or offsetting ensuing damage, irrespective of whether these acts were perpetrated voluntarily or whether they affect subjects of law. It applies to all scales of time and space.

Principle 4. No one is exempt from exercising responsibility for reasons of helplessness if he or she has made no effort to unite with others or, in the case of ignorance, has made no effort to inform himself/herself.

Principle 5. The responsibility of both public and private institutions does not exonerate the responsibility of their leaders and vice versa.

Principle 6. The biosphere and all its components are commons placed under humanity's protection. Responsibility for protecting these commons is exercised in proportion to the benefit gained from their use.

Principle 7. Such responsibility is imprescriptible when damage is irreversible.

What these principles mean for governments and nations

Given the urgent need to take action on climate change, governments and nations are collectively responsible for the following:

1. Cooperating to create conditions for the effective management of global public goods, reflecting stewardship of the planet.
2. Creating a transboundary judicial system, ensuring accountability and collective responsibility of all institutions and leaders whose impact transcends national borders.
3. Changing the rules of international trade, given the impact of current modes of production and consumption on the biosphere, shifting towards ecologically and socially sustainable global supply chains.
4. Acknowledging harm done due to past and present ways of life, and consider the fairest way to offer compensation to those who suffered this harm.
5. Establishing a system of measures globally applicable to all nations and entities engaged in resource use and trade.
6. Acknowledging fossil fuels as a global commons and establishing a tax on fossil fuel extraction which will serve to finance the green fund over the long-term.
7. Conceiving and enforcing appropriate economic tools, such as an emissions quota system and a 'fossil fuel currency', in order to decouple development and well-being from the consumption of fossil fuels and natural non-renewable resources.
8. Defining a road map to decarbonization, in accordance with agreed 'common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances'.

What these principles mean for transnational companies

1. Shareholders, executive officers and the company itself are collectively responsible for the direct and indirect impact of their activities.
 2. Transnational companies, their shareholders and executive officers are responsible for the entire supply chain under their direct or indirect influence. They are accountable to all stakeholders within their sphere of influence and should cooperate with other companies involved in the same activity to ensure supply chains are socially and ecologically sustainable.
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