



**WORLD  
SUSTAINABILITY  
FORUM**

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Madrid, Rome, Santa Fe

**A UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN  
RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF THE PRESENT GENERATIONS  
TOWARDS FUTURE GENERATIONS**

**Proposed by  
The World Sustainability Forum**

**Revision of 5 November 2022**



A Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities  
of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations

**Mindful** of the will of the peoples, set out in the Charter of the United Nations, to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and to safeguard the values and principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and all other relevant instruments of international law, permitting and enabling the full realization of the right of self-determination of all peoples living under colonial and foreign occupation.

**Considering** that, in accordance with the principles proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, and; Bearing in mind that the peoples of the United Nations have, in the Charter, reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights and in the dignity and worth of the human person, and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

**Further Considering** that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, and brought up in the spirit of the ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations, and in particular in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity,

**Reflecting** on the provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both adopted on 16 December 1966, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted on 20 November 1989, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted on 18 December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and Resolution A/RES/53/243 on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted on 13 September 1999 by the UN General Assembly,

**Concerned** by the fate of future generations in the face of existential and systemic threats as well as global challenges,

**Conscious** that, at this critical point in history, the very existence of humankind and the Earth's biosphere are threatened,

**Stressing** that full respect for human security and rights as well the ideals of democracy constitute an essential basis for the protection of the needs and interests of present and future generations. A fundamental right for all human beings, democracy should be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality and intergenerational responsibility, ensuring diversity of opinions and beliefs, and common interest,

**Asserting** the necessity of establishing new, equitable and global links of partnership and for promoting inter-generational solidarity for the sustainable co-evolution of man and the biosphere,

**Recalling** that the responsibilities of the present generations towards future generations have already been embraced in various instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All

Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted on 18 December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly; the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, adopted in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development on 14 June 1992; the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993, Resolution A/RES/53/243 on the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace adopted on 13 September 1999 by the UN General Assembly. the UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibility of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations of 12 November 1997, the United Nations General Assembly resolutions relating to the protection of the global climate for present and future generations adopted since 1990; the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO on 16 November 1972; the UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibility of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations of 12 November 1997; UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme, and the United Nations Development Programme Special Report, New Threats To Human Security In The Anthropocene: Demanding greater solidarity of 2022,

**Noting** that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the principle of the inadmissibility of discrimination and proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, including distinction based on sex,

**Cognizant** that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity,

**Convinced** that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields,

**Determined** to contribute to the dissolution of current world problems through transformational co-operation, to create such conditions as will ensure that the needs and interests of future generations are not jeopardized by the burden of the past, and to pass to following generations a better world to future generations,

**Resolved** to ensure the emergence of a planetary consciousness such that the present generations are fully aware of their responsibilities towards future generations,

**Recognizing** that the obligation of protecting the needs and interests of future generations is fundamental to the ethical mission of the United Nations, whose Charter enshrines the ideals of “justice and liberty and peace” founded on “the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”,

**Cognizant** that the fate of future generations critically depends on decisions and actions taken

today, and that present-day problems, including technological and material underdevelopment, unemployment, exclusion, discrimination and threats to the environment, and especially poverty that robs people, especially women and girls, of their dignity and rights, must be solved in the interests of both present and future generations,

**Convinced** that there is a moral responsibility to formulate behavioural guidelines for the present generations within a broad, future-oriented perspective,

**Recognizing** the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world and implies a duty of care to present and future generations,

**Whereas** we the peoples, to the best of our knowledge and ability, have a responsibility to foster intergenerational social justice, it is a goal which may not be achieved by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone,

**Mindful** that a narrow insistence on rights can result in conflict, division, and endless dispute, the neglect of human responsibilities to the present and future generations and perpetuate a culture of domination, violence and conflict,

**Affirming** the need to provide institutional and juridical means necessary to ensure human security, planetary well-being, and sustainable development obligates the United Nations to fully honour its commitments to the UN's founding Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement with this commitment to intergenerational human rights and human responsibilities,

The General Assembly therefore

proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations as a universal standard for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society shall contribute to the equitable advancement of communities of all their members. We, the peoples of the world thus renew and reinforce commitments already proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: namely, the full acceptance of the dignity of all people; their inalienable freedom and equality, and their solidarity with one another.

#### Article 1 - Needs and interests of future generations

Endowed with scientific reason and conscience, we the peoples accept a responsibility to each and all in a spirit of solidarity ensuring that the needs and interests of present and future generations are fully safeguarded.

#### Article 2 - Freedom of choice

With due regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, and while ensuring no one is left behind, it is important to make every effort to ensure that future as well as present generations enjoy full freedom of choice as to their political, economic and social systems and are able to preserve

their cultural diversity.

#### Article 3 - Maintenance and perpetuation of humankind

The present generations should actively strive to ensure the maintenance and perpetuation of humankind with due respect for the dignity of the human person. Consequently, the nature and form of human life must not be undermined in any way whatsoever.

#### Article 4 - Preservation of life on Earth

The present generations have the responsibility to bequeath to future generations an Earth which will not one day be irreversibly damaged by human activity. Each generation inheriting the Earth temporarily should take care to use natural resources reasonably and ensure that life is not prejudiced by harmful modifications of the ecosystems and that scientific and technological progress in all fields does not irreparably and irreversibly harm life on Earth.

#### Article 5 - Protection of the environment

1. In order to ensure that future generations benefit from the richness of the Earth's biosphere, the present generations should strive for planetary well-being and sustainable development all over the world in order to assure dignity, freedom, human security and justice for all people while preserving living conditions, particularly the quality and systemic integrity of the environment.
2. The present generations should ensure that future generations are not exposed to pollution which may endanger their health or their existence itself.
3. The present generations should preserve for future generations natural resources necessary for sustaining human life and for its sustainable development.
4. The present generations should take into account possible consequences for future generations of major projects before these are carried out.

#### Article 6 - Human genome and biodiversity

The human genome, in full respect of the dignity of the human person and human rights, must be protected and biodiversity safeguarded. Scientific and technological progress should not in any way impair or compromise the preservation of the human and other species.

#### Article 7 - Cultural diversity and cultural heritage

With due respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of nations and non-interference in their internal affairs; the present generations should take care to preserve the cultural diversity of humankind. The present generations, imbued by the spirit of non-violence, the culture of peace and global citizenship, have the responsibility to identify, protect and safeguard the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to transmit this common

heritage to future generations.

#### Article 8 - Common heritage of humankind

The present generations may use the common heritage of humankind, as defined in international law, provided that this does not entail compromising it irreparably and irreversibly.

#### Article 9 – Peace

1. All men, women and all social actors are henceforth accountable to and responsible for their fellow human beings, and to future generations, for peace in the world.
2. All human beings have the duty to respect and advance a culture of peace and disarmament in their various fields of operation: political, economic, social, cultural and international. They shall in no circumstances exercise or defend their rights in ways contrary to the aims and principles of United Nations.
3. The present generations should ensure that both they and future generations co-exist in peace, security respectful of international law, human rights and fundamental freedoms.
4. The present generations should spare future generations the scourge of war. To that end, they should avoid exposing future generations to the harmful consequences of armed conflicts as well as all other forms of aggression and use of weapons, contrary to humanitarian principles.
5. Multilateral peacebuilding shall be enhanced by international commitments to advance human security and human rights—to protecting civilians in conflict, empowering historically marginalized groups and communities or easing planetary pressures.

#### Article 10 - Human security

1. Reaffirming the principles of the founding documents of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Charter, and as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, human security is a universal imperative at the intersection of human rights, human responsibility, peace and sustainable development.
2. While proclaiming human rights and fundamental freedoms, the sovereign equality, protection and territorial integrity of nations and non-interference in their internal affairs, we also acknowledge that human security shall extend beyond securing individuals and their communities to recognise that human security in an era of planetary consciousness requires charting a science-informed path for the sustainable co-evolution of man and the biosphere.
3. In the context of historically unprecedented global systemic risks and informed by the moral imperative of inter-generational responsibility; human security, articulated in solidarity with the Articles contained herein, shall assure the sustainable co-evolution of man and the biosphere for present and future generations.

4. As humankind enters an era of planetary consciousness; recognizing its common fate and common responsibility implies that 'We the peoples' shall have both the right and responsibility to shape a future for all that is free from want, free from fear and free from indignity.

#### Article 11 - Development and education

1. The present generations should ensure the conditions of equitable, sustainable and universal socio-economic development and security of future generations, both in its individual and collective dimensions, in particular through a fair and prudent use of available resources for the purpose of eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions and in accordance with the principles of equity and social justice embraced by the United Nations is the *sine qua non* of Sustainable Development, as stated in the preamble of the 2030 Agenda.
2. Education is an important instrument to in-form human responsibilities of the present generations towards future generations including the sustainable development of man and the biosphere. It should be used to foster peace, justice, understanding, tolerance and equality for the benefit of present and future generations.

#### Article 12 – Non-discrimination

The present generations should refrain from taking any action or measure which would have the effect of leading to or perpetuating any form of discrimination for future generations.

#### Article 13 – Implementation

1. States, the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, individuals, public and private bodies should assume their full responsibilities in promoting respect for the ideals laid down in this Declaration, and encourage by all appropriate means their full recognition and effective implementation.
2. With precedent established in the 1946 United Nations establishment of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the United Nations systems shall establish a Commission on Human Responsibilities as a subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council.

The Commission shall be mandated to examine, monitor and publicly report either on human responsibilities in specific countries or territories (known as country mechanisms or mandates) or on major phenomena of human responsibilities violations including human security violations worldwide (known as thematic mechanisms or mandates).

The Commission shall be the main United Nations legislative body working to promote, educate, and protect human responsibilities of present to future generations. The Commission shall provide overall policy guidelines, studies of human responsibilities problems, develop and codify new international norms and monitor the observance of human responsibilities around the world recognising that addressing issues within the human responsibility framework requires systemic action with integrated policies and

procedures embodying a commitment to the broad realization of human responsibilities.

The Commission shall provide a forum for States, civil society – through non-governmental organizations – and international organizations to voice their concerns about human responsibilities issues.

The main themes addressed by the Commission shall include: the responsibilities to sustainable development; the promotion and protection of human responsibilities, economic, social and cultural responsibilities; including the work of sub-commissions, treaty bodies and national institutions; and advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human responsibilities. From time to time the Commission may identify areas in which existing standards needed to be further developed to address new and growing concerns. Working groups of the Commission shall include responsibilities to sustainable development, and structural adjustment programmes and human responsibilities.

Mechanisms shall be developed whereby complaints from individuals or organizations when revealed as a pattern of serious human responsibilities violations, shall be brought to the attention of the Commission.

The Commission shall be entrusted with the elaboration of human responsibility standards. Those standards relating, inter alia, to the responsibility to sustainable development, civil and political responsibilities, economic, social and cultural responsibilities, the responsibilities of the present generations to future generations.

All States that accept these standards shall be obliged to implement the responsibilities they entail and to report regularly to international bodies set up by the Commission to monitor their compliance.

Human responsibility standards have little value if they are not implemented. Consequently, the Commission shall commit to examining issues of implementation. Its network of mechanisms - experts, representatives and rapporteurs shall play an important role in annually reporting to the Commission. Information received from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals shall be used in the preparation of these reports.

Where problems are identified, the Commission shall take action to address them. It may regularly request the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Responsibilities to provide assistance to Governments through its programme of advisory services and technical cooperation in the field of human responsibilities. This assistance shall form of expert advice, human responsibilities seminars, national and regional training courses and workshops, fellowships and scholarships, and other activities aimed at strengthening national capacities for the protection and promotion of human responsibilities.

3. Equipped with science-informed foresight to help represent succeeding generations, by inter-governmental mandate the United Nations shall institutionalise and empower an independent Ombudsperson for Future Generations. Obliging policymakers to protect the future from the present; a legitimate defender of the interests of the future; the Ombudsperson for Future Generations's moral authority shall obtain from the values and



principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Furnished with institutional mechanisms, requisite legal provisions, and procedural requirements that bring the long term sharply and consistently into political focus, the Ombudsperson for Future Generations shall be supported by a systemic risk foresight facility.

4. Strengthening the capacity of the United Nations; serving as an instrument to bring greater deliberation, visibility, and impartiality to decision-making; with a budget guarantee mechanism; the Ombudsperson shall be empowered to initiate proactive actions in the form of ex officio investigations, raise issues in its annual report to the General Assembly, conduct reactive enquiries and judicial processes, address the media or the General Assembly, initiate public awareness campaigns, investigations, and other such actions as needed to deliver on its fiduciary responsibility to future generations. Promoting inter-generational solidarity for the sustainable co-evolution of man and the biosphere, the Ombudsperson for Future Generations's non-restrictive mandate and broad jurisdiction shall extend to and make concrete environmental, legal and political commitments towards future generations.
5. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any state, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the responsibilities, rights and freedom set forth in this Declaration, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and the Charter of the United Nations.
6. In view of its ethical mission and to advance democratic multilateralism, the UN shall disseminate this Declaration as widely as possible and undertake all necessary steps to raise public awareness concerning the ideals enshrined herein.

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