

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY PROJECT

This nascent project whose elaboration is fruit of an international collaboration of jurists and social leaders, is presented by the World Forum for Alternatives to the social movements and organizations attending the “peoples’ summit” in Rio de Janeiro in June, 2012, to solicit their observations and proposals before a formal presentation of this document at the occasion of the 2013 World Social Forum in Tunisia. All contributions by groups and individuals are welcome; please send them to the following email address: declara2012@gmail.com

PREAMBLE

We live in a critical time for the survival of natural and human life. The attacks against the planet are multiplying, affecting all living species, ecosystems, biodiversity, even the climate. Peoples’ and communities’ lives are destroyed by land dispossession. The monopolistic concentration of capital, the hegemony of the financial sector, deforestation, monoculture agriculture, the massive use of toxic agents, wars, cultural imperialism, austerity policies and the destruction of social advances, are Humanity’s daily bread.

We live in times of a multidimensional crisis; it is financial, economic, food, energetic, climactic. It is a systemic crisis, a crisis of values and civilization, with logics of death. This historic moment does not allow for partial answers, but demands a search for alternatives.

We live in times marked by a demand for coherency. The Resolutions of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations’ International Covenants on Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States (1974), the World Charter for Nature (1982), the Declaration on the Right to Development (1986), the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the Earth Charter (2000), the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007), among others, demand the articulation of a holistic perspective and an integrated ecological, economic, political and cultural system for decision-making, in the service of life.

We live in times in which human beings are realizing they constitute the conscious part of a Nature that can live without them and that they are progressively destroying the earth. This destruction results from the irrationality of their predatory actions guided by a logic which seeks profit and capitalist accumulation and is fed by an anthropocentric vision of linear infinite progress on a planet with inexhaustible resources. In order to survive, we must shift from anthropocentrism to biocentrism.

We live in times when social and political movements’ actions are multiplying as they fight from below for ecological justice and peoples’ collective rights. The perception that the life of Humanity is a common and shared project, conditional on the life of the planet is growing and is expressed in various documents such as: the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Peoples (Algiers, 1976), the Beijing

Declaration of Indigenous Women (Beijing, 1995) and the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth (Cochabamba, 2010) is requiring an intense shared effort which respects differences.

To reestablish the rights of nature and to construct interpersonal solidarity globally, tasks inseparably linked, a new initiative parallel to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is today necessary. Its aim is to redefine, from a holistic perspective, the essential elements of humanity's collective life on the planet, in order to propose a new paradigm around which social and political movements can converge.

The Declaration attempts (1) to shift from exploiting nature as a natural resource to respecting the earth as the source of all life; (2) to privilege use value over exchange value in economic activity; (3) to introduce the principle of spreading democracy in all human relations, including gender relations, and in all social institutions and (4) to promote interculturality to allow all cultures, knowledge, philosophies and religions to clarify the perception of reality, to participate in the construction of the ethic necessary for its permanent construction, and contribute to the anticipations that permit to say, "Another world is possible." It is the paradigm of the "Common Good of Humanity" or the principle of the "Good Life" (Buen Vivir) that offers the possibility, capacity and responsibility to produce and reproduce the planet's existence and the physical, cultural and spiritual life of all human beings in the world. Hence, the proposal of a Universal Declaration.

THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE COMMON GOOD OF HUMANITY

- **(1) To respect Nature as the source of physical, cultural and spiritual life**

Article 1 (To establish the symbiosis between the earth and the human gender, the conscious part of nature)

Nature is the origin of the multiple forms of life, including humanity, having the earth as its home. The core and crust, air, sunlight, atmosphere, water, soil; the rivers, oceans, forests, flora, fauna, biodiversity; the seeds and living species' genomes are all elements which constitute her reality. Nature should be respected in her beauty and her fundamental integrity, her equilibriums and the richness of her ecosystems which produce and reproduce biodiversity, and in her capacity for regeneration. It is the responsibility of the human race to consciously respect ecological justice and the rights of nature, on which depend its existence and the Common Good of Humanity.

All practices that destroy the regenerative capacities of "Mother Earth" such as the savage exploitation of natural resources, the destructive use of chemical products, the massive emission of greenhouse gases, the depletion of soils and aquatic reserves by monoculture agriculture, the irrational use of energy, and the production of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons are inconsistent with humans'

responsibility to nature, the Common Good of Humanity and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) and for these reasons susceptible to sanctions.

Article 2 (To build the harmony between all elements of nature)

The peoples of the earth have the duty to live in harmony with all other elements of nature. They should not initiate any development intervention which could gravely or irreversibly endanger the life of nature which is also the basis for the reproduction of the physical, cultural and spiritual life of humanity.. The principles of information provision and prior consultation of communities or peoples concerned by mineral extraction projects, public works, and all other actions using natural riches should be the rule.

All actions, institutions and environmental systems that implement development models contrary to the integrity and reproduction of the ecological system are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore will be submitted to sanctions.

Article 3 (To care for the earth, the foundation of all physical, cultural and spiritual life)

Nature is a unique and finite reality, the source of life for all species that inhabit her and all living entities not yet born. The earth can be administered by human beings with the necessary guarantees for the continuity of the administration, but it cannot be appropriated, commodified, or made a source of speculation. It cannot suffer irreversible systematic aggression for the purpose of any mode of production. Natural resources (mineral, oil, ocean, forest resources) are collective heritage and assets that cannot be appropriated by individuals, corporations or financial groups. The elements of the earth (soil, air, water, sea, rivers, jungles, forests, flora, fauna, spaces, genomes, etc.) should be administered, extracted and treated with the upmost respect for the reproduction of ecosystems, biodiversity, species' lives, the welfare of both current and future generations.

The contamination of water, soil, the seas; the patenting of nature; the privatization of the earth; the commodification of natural riches and natural elements necessary for the reproduction of life among living species, particularly water, oxygen and seeds, are all inconsistent with a constructive respect for nature, the Common Good of Humanity, and are therefore prohibited and susceptible to sanctions.

Article 4 (To assure the regenerating capacity of the earth)

It is urgent that the regenerative capacity of the earth be restored. All peoples and individuals are obligated to contribute to this end. Environmental impact inventories and audits must be implemented, assessments and reparations for damages administered. All peoples and individuals and especially industries, corporations and governments, have the responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle the materials used in the production, circulation and consumption of goods.

Practices of planned obsolescence, the waste of energy and other primary materials, irresponsible disposal of hazardous waste, and the omission or avoidance of ecological restoration are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity, and therefore susceptible to sanctions.

- **(2) Economic production at the service of life and her continuity**

Article 5 (To organize social forms of production and, without private accumulation)

It is necessary for the Common Good of Humanity and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) that people, institutions and economic systems prioritize social forms of ownership of the principal means of production and economic circulation: community, family, communal, cooperative, citizen, and public, thus avoiding processes of individual or cooperative accumulation that provoke unjust social inequality. Workers' and consumers' control of the production and circulation of goods and services will be organized according to adequate social forms, from cooperative to processes of citizen participation and nationalization.

The appropriation of the means of production and circulation by individuals or corporations for the purposes of private capitalist accumulation is contrary to the Common Good of Humanity and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) and is therefore prohibited.

Article 6 (To give priority of use value over exchange value)

The economic system of production and circulation is destined to satisfy the needs and capacities of all peoples and all individuals on the planet. Accessing use values is a fundamental right necessary for the production and reproduction of life. The exchange value, product of commercialization, should be subjected to use value rather than serving private capital accumulation and creating financial bubbles resulting from speculation and being a source of large social inequalities.

All individual or corporate actions that commodify use values as mere exchange values, that instrumentalize them with advertising for irrational consumption by consumers, and that encourage speculation for the private accumulation of capital, are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity. Also inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity are: tax havens; banking secrecy; speculation on food commodities, natural resources and energy sources. Public and private "odious debts" and poverty as the result of socially unjust relations, are declared illegal.

Article 7 (To promote dignified and non-exploitative labor)

Processes of production and circulation should ensure workers a dignified, participatory job that is adaptive to family and cultural life, that fosters their skills and ensures them an adequate material existence.

All modern forms of slavery, servitude and labor exploitation, especially of children, for the purposes of individual profit or private accumulation of surplus value as well as limitations on labor organizing are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and Good Life (Buen Vivir) and are therefore prohibited.

Article 8 (To reconstruct territories)

Facing “globalization” which has favored a unipolar economy, the concentration of decision-making powers, the hegemony of financial capital and the irrational circulation of goods and services, it is indispensable to reconstruct territories as a base for food, energetic sovereignty and for the main exchanges, to regionalize economies and base them on principles of complementarity and solidarity; and for the peripheral regions, to “disconnect” from the hegemonic economic center, in order to assure commercial, financial and productive autonomy..

The constitution of monopolies and oligopolies, whatever their area of productive or financial activity, are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore prohibited.

Article 9 (To guarantee access to common goods and universal social protection)

There are certain common goods that are indispensable for the collective life of individuals and peoples and that constitute inalienable rights. These are: food, housing, health, education, and material and immaterial communication. Various forms of citizen control or social property exist for the effective organization of access to these goods. “Universal protection” is a right of all peoples and individuals, a responsibility of public authorities that should be assured by an adequate fiscal policy.

The privatization of public services in order to contribute to capital accumulation is inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and is therefore prohibited. The following are susceptible for sanctions: speculating on food, housing, health, education, communication as is corruption while exercising these rights.

- **(3) Collective democratic organization based on participation**

Article 10 (To generalize democracy and the construction of the subject)

All peoples and human beings are subjects of their histories and have the right to a collective social and political organization that guarantees this. This organization must ensure harmony with nature and access to the material needs of life through production and circulation systems built on social justice principles. To achieve these goals, collective organization should allow everyone’s participation in the production and reproduction of the life of the planet and human beings, i.e., of the Common Good of Humanity. The organizing principle of this goal is to spread democracy into all social relationships: family, gender, work, political authority, between peoples and nations and in all social, political, economic, cultural and religious institutions. Along with political forms of participatory democracy, participation should be organized in all sectors of common life, economic, social, cultural.

All non-democratic forms of organizing society’s political, economic, social and cultural life are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) and are therefore

prohibited. Genocides are condemned as irreparable acts of discrimination. Susceptible to sanctions are all discriminations based on gender, race, nation, culture, sexual orientation, physical or mental capacity, religion or ideological affiliation. Along with political forms of participatory democracy, participation should be encouraged in all sectors of common life.

Article 11 (To build equality between men and women)

Particular importance will be given to relations between men and women, unequal since time immemorial in the various types of societies that have existed during human history. All institutions and all social and cultural systems should recognize, respect and promote the right to a life in plenitude for women in equality with men.

Social and economic practices, institutions and cultural or religious systems that defend discrimination or actively discriminate against women are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity. All forms of masculine domination, particularly differences in wage income and the non-recognition of family domestic work linked to the reproduction of life, are susceptible to sanctions.

Article 12 (To prohibit war)

Democratic international relations do not allow the use of war to resolve conflicts. In this day and age, peace is not guaranteed by an arms race. The availability of nuclear, biological, chemical weapons directly jeopardizes the life of Humanity. Arms have become a business. Their production causes an enormous waste of energy, natural resources and human talents; their use means, aside from the loss of lives, serious environmental destruction.

The manufacture, possession and use of weapons of mass destruction, the accumulation of conventional weapons to guarantee regional hegemony and control of natural resources, hegemonic regional pacts, military solutions to solve internal political problems are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore prohibited.

Article 13 (To build the State on the basis of Common Good)

The role of the State, as collective administrator, is to guarantee the Common Good, i.e. the public interest, as compared to individual or private interests. Democratic participation is therefore needed to define the Common Good (constitutions) and how it will be applied. All peoples and communities of the earth, in the plurality of each of their members, organizations and social movements, have the right to political systems of direct or delegated participation with a revocable mandate. Regional governments and international organizations, particularly the United Nations, must be constructed on democratic principles. The same is true for all institutions that represent specific interests or business sectors, such as industrial companies, estates, financial or commercial organisms, political parties, religious institutions or trade unions, NGOs, sports or cultural groups, humanitarian organizations.

All dictatorial or authoritarian forms of exercising political or economic power, where no representative minorities, formal or informal, monopolize decisions without participation, initiative or popular control, are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore prohibited. Also prohibited are

public subsidies for organizations, social movements, political parties or religious institutions that do not respect democratic principles or that practice gender or racial discrimination.

Article 16 (To build Interculturality)

The Common Good of Humanity requires the participation of all cultures, knowledge, arts, philosophies, religions, and folklore in interpreting reality and in the development of the ethics necessary to its construction, the production of its symbolic, linguistic and aesthetic expressions, as well as the formulation of utopias. The cultural richness of humanity, which throughout history has become patrimony, cannot be destroyed. Interculturality assumes the mixed contribution of all cultures, with their diversity, to the various dimensions of the Common Good of Humanity: respect for nature as the source of life, the priority of use value over exchange value within processes of justice, widespread democratization and diversity and cultural exchange.

Cultural ethnocide, the practices, institutions and economic, political and cultural systems that hide, discriminate against or commodify cultural achievements of peoples and those that impose a monocultural homogenization, identifying human development with Western culture, are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and therefore prohibited. Also prohibited are the practices, institutions, and political-cultural systems that demand the return of an illusory past, often endorsing violence or discrimination against other peoples.

Article 14 (To respect the rights of indigenous peoples)

Native peoples have the right to be recognized in their differences. For this they need the material and institutional foundations necessary for the reproduction of their customs, languages, worldviews and communal institutions: a protected territory of reference, a bilingual education, the ability to have their own judicial system, public representation, etc. They make important contributions to the contemporary world: the protection of Mother Earth, resistance to the extractive-export mode of production and accumulation, and a holistic vision of the natural and social reality.

Actions, institutions and economic, political and cultural systems that destroy, segregate, discriminate against or hinder the physical, cultural and spiritual life of native peoples are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore prohibited.

Article 15 (The recognize the right to resistance)

All peoples and social groups have the right to develop critical thought, to practice peaceful resistance and if necessary, insurrection against destructive actions taken against nature, human life, collective or individual liberties.

Thought censorship, the criminalization of resistance and the violent repression of liberation movements, are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are prohibited.

- **(4) The intercultural as a dynamic of thought and social ethics**

Article 17 (To assure the right to information and the circulation of knowledge)

All peoples of the earth have the right to information, to exchange knowledge, expertise and information useful for constructing the Common Good of Humanity.

Monopolies of the media by groups with financial or industrial power, commodification of the public by advertising agencies, exclusive and non-participatory control by States over the content of information, and patents of scientific knowledge that impede the circulation of knowledges useful for the well-being of peoples are inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and are therefore prohibited.

- **(5) Obligations and sanctions for noncompliance with the declaration**

Article 18 (Applying the paradigm of the Common Good of Humanity)

All peoples of the earth have the right that any noncompliance with or violation of the rights set forth in this Declaration, that in its entirety aims to construct permanently the Common Good of Humanity, or the non-execution of the mechanisms set forth herein, shall be known, prosecuted, punished and redressed according to the scale and impact of the damage caused, in agreement with, when they do exist, with the dispositions of domestic or international law. Short or middle range transition measures (reforms and regulations) are allowing to change the relations with nature, to establish the priority of use value, to generalize democracy and to create multiculturality. However they should not become only adaptations of the existing mode of accumulation to new ecological and social demands.

All impunity and all full stop laws, amnesty or any other dealing that denies victims justice, that is, to nature and her conscious part humankind, is inconsistent with the Common Good of Humanity and the Good Life (Buen Vivir) and are consequently null and void.