

# PEOPLE'S SUSTAINABILITY TREATY ON ETHICAL AND SPIRITUAL VALUES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

*(Zero draft for comments – Please send comments by May 27, 2012 to Richard Clugston at [rmclugston@aol.com](mailto:rmclugston@aol.com) - more information at <http://sustainabilitytreaties.org/draft-treaties/>*

## 1. PREAMBLE

*In addition to three dimensions of sustainable development, there is a fourth dimension: a shared vision of ethical and spiritual values that inspires and guides cooperative action for change. Achieving the environmental, economic, and social goals associated with sustainability requires worldwide collaboration, which is not possible without shared values. The vision of a sustainable future as an inclusive social and ecological ideal that is good, right and just is needed to inspire strong commitment and drive change. The emergence of a new ethical and spiritual consciousness supporting the transition to a just, sustainable and peaceful world is one of the most promising developments of the last sixty years.*

*We must reorient our economy to support full human development in a flourishing Earth community. A green economy needs to go beyond eco-efficiency and green growth to engage in the deep shift that guides us to live in ways that all can live. Spiritual and ethical values are central to this.*

*We dream of a world without poverty, a world that is equitable, a world that respects the dignity of all living beings, and the sacredness of the natural world, a world where we recognize the mutual care and deep regard required for us to act in ways that will genuinely reduce poverty, and protect Earth's natural resources, a world that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, where the challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and social inequity have been successfully addressed. This is an achievable dream, but we must collectively pave a new way. The current development pathway is deeply flawed and will not realize our dream.*

*We recall the recommendation by the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission report) for the creation of a "Universal Declaration on Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development" in the form of a "new charter". This charter would articulate principles to help guide nations in transitioning to sustainable development, and promote values that encourage standards of consumption and production that are within Earth's carrying capacity, which people can realize in their own lives.*

*We recognize that the adoption of such an ethical Charter was a goal of the preparatory process for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It was not adopted, and since then, too little progress has been made in implementing governments' commitments to sustainable development.*

*We affirm that the need for ethical and spiritual values to guide sustainable development has become increasingly urgent, given the trajectory of globalization over the past 20 years.*

*We recognize that in the action plans of the various UN Summits during the 1990s, the governments of the world committed to "social, economic and spiritual development" and to "achieving a world of greater stability and peace, built on ethical and spiritual vision."*

*We reaffirm the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.*

*We affirm that the Outcome Document from Rio+20 should acknowledge the importance of a comprehensive ethical framework (as exemplified by the Earth Charter) as a guide for sustainable development and ensure that governments make good on past commitments to Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals, and other intergovernmental agreements.*

*We recall that over 100 inputs into the Rio+20 Compilation Document made reference to the ethical and/or spiritual dimensions of sustainable development. In addition, some Member States' and Major Groups' responses to the Zero Draft referenced ethics, spirituality, the Earth Charter (e.g., Russia, Jordan, NGO major group, Holy See, Indigenous Major Group) as did the report of the high level panel on global sustainability.*

## **2. PRINCIPLES**

### *Our Spiritual and Ethical Principles*

*We share similar understandings of the purpose of development/path to the good life and general principles derived from this (e.g. the golden rule). We emphasize values such as respect and care for the community of life and future generations. We stress the need for humility, awe and wonder, and responsiveness to a deeper level of existence, to quieting our desires and fears, to seeking to be more, not have more (wealth, power, control), and to living in a way that all can live.*

*We affirm unity in diversity as a way of expressing the principle of the oneness of humanity. Unity in diversity stands in contrast to uniformity. It cherishes the natural diversity of temperament and talents among individuals as well as humanity's variegated experiences, cultures and viewpoints, inasmuch as they contribute to the human family's progress and well-being.*

*We recognize Earth as a single sacred community bound together in interdependent relationships. Earth is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects. Earth's processes and components developed over long periods of time. They offer possibilities, impose constraints, and require respect. Key roles of humans are celebrating and caring for the entire community of life in conscious self-awareness.*

*The preoccupation with the production and accumulation of material objects and comforts (as sources of meaning, happiness and social acceptance) has consolidated itself in the structures of power and information to the exclusion of competing voices and paradigms. The unfettered cultivation of needs and wants has led to a system fully dependent on excessive consumption for a privileged few, while reinforcing exclusion, poverty and inequality, for the majority.*

*The failure to place economics into the broader context of humanity's social and spiritual existence has led to a corrosive materialism in the world's more economically advantaged regions, and persistent conditions of deprivation among the masses of the world's peoples.*

*Principles we emphasise to guide the outcomes of Rio+20 and intergovernmental agreements, focused on the need to reorient development policy and practice to serve full human development for all in a flourishing Earth community: (These principles are common to The Stockholm Declaration, the Rio Declaration, The Johannesburg Declaration, The Earth Charter, The One Planet Living Principles, The Green Economy Coalition, the TUC 'Just Transition' principles, and The New Economics Foundation. They are a subset of the "Principles for a Green Economy" put together by Stakeholder Forum in collaboration with Bioregional and the Earth Charter Initiative.)*

**Equitable distribution of wealth** - *Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations, to reduce disparities between rich and poor, and achieve social and economic justice, within a sustainable and fair share of the world's resources and leaving sufficient space for wildlife and wilderness, recognizing its critical importance to future generations.*

**Economic equity and fairness** - *Guided by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, create economic partnerships that would transfer substantial financial and technological assistance to less developed countries, to help minimize the gap between the developed and developing world and support the environmental sustainability of both.*

**Intergenerational Equity** - *Environmental resources and ecosystems must be carefully managed and safeguarded so as to enhance the value of environmental assets for future generations, thereby equitably meeting their needs and allowing them to flourish.*

**Precautionary Approach** - *Science should be utilized to enhance social and environmental outcomes, through the identification of environmental risk. Scientific uncertainty of environmental impacts shall not lead to avoidance of measures to prevent environmental degradation. The 'burden of proof' should lie with those claiming that there will not be significant environmental impacts*

**The Right to Development** - *Human development in harmony with the environment is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development, so that individuals and societies are empowered to achieve positive social and environmental outcomes.*

**Internalization of Externalities** - *Building true social and environmental value should be the central goal of policy. To this end, market prices must reflect real social and environmental costs and benefits including those to come about in the future, so that those who pollute and exploit bear the environmental and social costs. Tax regimes and regulatory frameworks should be used to 'tilt the playing field', making 'good' things cheap and 'bad' things very expensive.*

**Information, Participation and Accountability** - *All citizens should have access to information concerning the environmental and social issues that effect them, as well as the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. To ensure that these issues are handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, institutions at all levels (national and international) must be democratic and accountable, and make use of tools that enable civil society to hold them to account. In this regard, the access to justice by citizens for redress and remedy is a cornerstone of enhancing accountability.*

**Sustainable Consumption and Production** - *Introduce sustainable production and consumption with sustainable and equitable resource use. Reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, i.e. reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used, acknowledge the scarcity of the Earth resources and implement activities accordingly.*

**Just Transition** - *There will be costs in making the transition to a low carbon, green economy in the pursuit of sustainable development. Some States and actors are better able to bear those costs than others and are more resilient to transitional changes. In the process of change, the most vulnerable must be supported and protected – developing countries must have access to appropriate financial and technical assistance, citizens and communities must also have access to new skills and jobs.*

**Redefine Well-Being** - *GDP is an inadequate tool for measuring social wellbeing and environmental integrity. Many socially and environmentally damaging activities enhance GDP – such as fossil fuel exploitation and financial speculation. Human wellbeing and quality of life, and environmental health should be the guiding objectives of economic development.*

**Gender Equality** - *Gender equality and equity are prerequisites to the transition to a green economy and the achievement of sustainable development. Women have a vital role to play as agents of change for environmental management and development – their actions must be rewarded accordingly and their skills enhanced.*

**Safeguard Biodiversity and Prevent Pollution of Any Part of the Environment** – *protect and restore biodiversity and natural habitats as integral to development and human wellbeing, and develop a system of governance that protects the resilience of ecosystems to prevent irreversible damage.*

### **3. COMMITMENTS**

*Describing the commitments of our organizations and communities to realize the future we want: (text adapted from Statement by faith leaders at April 2 Wellbeing and Happiness Meeting, and from “Towards Rio + 20 and Beyond - A Turning Point in Earth History” from the Jacob Soetendorp Institute). While each of our traditions has its own unique commitments and language for expressing them, we are mutually supportive of this general framework:*

*Representing various spiritual, religious and secular traditions, we believe that in the new economic paradigm, the role of all of our traditions is to preserve and transmit to future generations the wisdom and love inherent in own heritages, while simultaneously serving as a force for change to nurture unity, in the knowledge that the world is one community, interconnected, and interdependent.*

*The new economic paradigm is based upon compassion, altruism, balance, and peace, dedicated to the well-being, happiness, dignity, and sacredness of all forms of life.*

*Because external economic realities mirror internal psychological and spiritual realities, participants in the new paradigm pledge themselves to ethical conduct, reflecting and holding themselves to the highest level of integrity and virtue, increasing their sharing and dedication to others, and resilience in the face of challenges.*

*Because economics is based upon relationships, in the new paradigm, relationships are characterised by active service, justice, and cherishing the dignity of other's lives.*

*We commit ourselves to thus nurturing the new economic paradigm personally and collectively in our own spiritual, religious and secular communities. May the new paradigm swiftly blossom throughout the world for the benefit of all those alive today and future generations yet unborn.*

*We embrace with joy the blessed opportunity to forge a global partnership to truly care for Earth and one another.*

*We recognize that the principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions, calling us always to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves.*

*We recognize that many, in the name of religion, have promoted violence and injustice towards others, and have supported the destruction of the environment. This is a perversion of what our traditions call us to do.*

*We commit to fully engage in the paradigm shift towards common but differentiated responsibilities and global empathy with all our brothers and sisters, and the whole community of life on Earth. Manifestations of this global empathy such as the Earth Charter, the Charter for Compassion, and the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto will guide our way towards strengthened interfaith collaboration for creating a more just, peaceful, and sustainable future.*

*We commit to tread more lightly on Earth and regard it as our sacred duty to lead through example and demonstrate sustainable living in our religious and spiritual communities. In this, we draw strength, encouragement and inspiration from the many good practices that are already being applied by our communities around the world.*

*We commit to educate ourselves to work effectively in development policy arenas, understanding the critical changes that need to be made in our economic and governance structures to create a flourishing future for all.*

*We commit to redouble our efforts of serving as forces for good, by weighing in on the major international processes including Rio + 20, the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals.*

*We urge our governments (and intergovernmental organizations) to adopt the policies and practices necessary to create the future we want, at Rio+20 and beyond. The following are emerging priority areas for our various spiritual, religious and secular traditions. While each of our organizations has its particular agenda, we are mutually supportive of these recommendations:*

- 1. Acknowledge the fundamental importance of shared ethical and spiritual values in making the transition to a sustainable way of life.*
- 2. Express responsibility to future generations by implementing the precautionary principle and establishing Ombudspersons for Future Generations at global, national and local levels.*
- 3. Create a green economy based on strong sustainability and adopt alternative economic indicators to GDP that include social well-being and ecological integrity. Develop indicators reflecting the values and ethics underlying individual and collective choices and behavior necessary to achieve sustainability, while incorporating and adapting to the diverse cultural, ethnic and spiritual traditions of nations and peoples, to express a more complete vision of the goals and purpose of a sustainable and ever-advancing civilization and of desires for happiness and prosperity.*
- 4. Build institutional frameworks and structures within the UN that make ethical considerations primary, for example,*
  - a. An Intergovernmental Ethics Panel for Ecological Civilization (IEPEC) to complement the three scientific panels: the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the International Resource Panel, and the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services. The IEPEC*

would bring together people in the fields of environmental ethics, eco-theology and eco-philosophy to provide ethical advice on sustainable development from the many wider perspectives of ecological civilization.

- b. *An UN Permanent Forum on ethics, patterned after the Permanent Forum of Indigenous Peoples, to provide a space for systematic consultation on the ethical implications of issues, proposals and projects*
  - c. *An UN Office of Ethical Assessment in the Secretariat, similar in function to the Offices of Technology Assessment that have operated effectively at the national level, to be staffed by experts knowledgeable in the major religious and ethical perspectives, and to draw on outside consultants as necessary.*
5. *Adopt sustainable development goals, including one focused on sustainable production and consumption.*
  6. *Ensure that proposals for a new institutional framework for sustainable development, and related global governance reforms, include a mandate of trusteeship for global common goods on behalf all peoples, the greater community of life, and future generations.*
  7. *Ensure that all have access to quality education for sustainable ways of living.*
  8. *Provide supportive mechanisms for a Just Transition – ensuring the right to sustainable development to all.*

#### **4. ACTION PLAN**

*The various organizations in our treaty circle are discussing the specific actions we will take together to realize the above principles and commitments at Rio+20 and beyond.*

*We shall continue to remain in dialogue to refine our common agenda:*

- *To awaken all people to a set of higher values, which inspire human action in the service of all living beings, and the natural world.*
- *To provide a simple and accessible education in spiritual and moral understanding of universal spiritual principles and values to build inner strength and capacity, enabling all people to bring about positive change.*
- *To reaffirm the spiritual identity, inherent goodness, worth, and dignity of the human being to foster a spirit of universal sister and brotherhood, facilitating a holistic vision of the true paths to full development.*
- *To bring about a change of awareness, attitude, vision, and action as the foundation for world-benefiting sustainable development.*

- *To explore human-centered development by offering spiritual perspectives on secular issues and facilitating a greater recognition of rights and responsibilities that may be easily and simply realised in each person's life.*

## **5. SIGNATORIES**

*We, civil society organizations, pledge to honour the agreed principles, commitments and action plans:*

1. *Name, Country Organization, Address, website, Email,*