

Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities

(Proposed by the InterAction Council)

Preamble

Whereas 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 implies obligations or responsibilities,

whereas the exclusive insistence on rights can result in conflict, division, and endless dispute, and the neglect of human responsibilities can lead to lawlessness and chaos,

whereas the rule of law and the promotion of human rights depend on the readiness of men and women to act justly,

whereas global problems demand global solutions which can only be achieved through ideas, values, and norms respected by all cultures and societies,

whereas all people, to the best of their knowledge and ability, have a responsibility to foster a better social order, both at home and globally, a goal which cannot be achieved by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone,

whereas human aspirations for progress and improvement can only be realized by agreed values and standards applying to all people and institutions at all times,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly

proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities as a common standard for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall contribute to the advancement of communities and to the enlightenment 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. Awareness and acceptance of these responsibilities should be taught and promoted throughout the world.

Fundamental Principles for Humanity

Article 1

Every person, regardless of gender, ethnic origin, social status, political opinion, language, age, nationality, or religion, **has a responsibility to treat all people in a humane way.**

Article 2

No person should lend support to any form of inhumane behavior, but all people have a responsibility to strive for the dignity and self-esteem of all others.

Article 3

No person, no group or organization, no state, no army or police stands above good and evil; all are subject to ethical standards. Everyone has a responsibility to promote good and to avoid evil in all things.

Article 4

All people, endowed with reason and conscience, must accept a responsibility to each and all, to families and communities, to races, nations, and religions in a spirit of solidarity: **What you do not wish to be done to yourself, do not do to others.**

Non-Violence and Respect for Life

Article 5

Every person has a responsibility to **respect life**. No one has the right to injure, to torture or to kill another human person. This does not exclude the right of justified self-defense of individuals or communities.

Article 6

Disputes between states, groups or individuals should be resolved without violence. No government should tolerate or participate in acts of genocide or terrorism, nor should it abuse women, children, or any other civilians as instruments of war. Every citizen and public official has a responsibility to act in a peaceful, non-violent way.

Article 7

Every person is infinitely precious and must be protected unconditionally. The animals and the natural environment also demand protection. All people have a responsibility to protect the air, water and soil of the earth for the sake of present inhabitants and future generations.

Justice and Solidarity

Article 8

Every person has a responsibility to behave with **integrity, honesty and fairness**. No person or group should rob or arbitrarily deprive any other person or group of their property.

Article 9

All people, given the necessary tools, have a responsibility to make serious efforts to overcome poverty, malnutrition, ignorance, and inequality. They should promote sustainable development all over the world in order to assure dignity, freedom, security and justice for all people.

Article 10

All people have a responsibility to develop their talents through diligent endeavor; they should have equal access to education and to meaningful work. Everyone should lend support to the needy, the disadvantaged, the disabled and to the victims of discrimination.

Article 11

All property and wealth must be used responsibly in accordance with justice and for the advancement of the human race. Economic and political power must not be handled as an instrument of domination, but in the service of economic justice and of the social order.

Truthfulness and Tolerance

Article 12

Every person has a responsibility to **speak and act truthfully**. No one, however high or mighty, should speak lies. The right to privacy and to personal and professional confidentiality is to be respected. No one is obliged to tell all the truth to everyone all the time.

Article 13

No politicians, public servants, business leaders, scientists, writers or artists are exempt from general ethical standards, nor are physicians, lawyers and other professionals who have special duties to clients. Professional and other codes of ethics should reflect the priority of general standards such as those of truthfulness and fairness.

Article 14

The freedom of the media to inform the public and to criticize institutions of society and governmental actions, which is essential for a just society, must be used with responsibility and discretion. Freedom of the media carries a special responsibility for accurate and truthful reporting. Sensational reporting that degrades the human person or dignity must at all times be avoided.

Article 15

While religious freedom must be guaranteed, the representatives of religions have a special responsibility to avoid expressions of prejudice and acts of discrimination toward those of different beliefs. They should not incite or legitimize hatred, fanaticism and religious wars, but should foster tolerance and mutual respect between all people.

Mutual Respect and Partnership

Article 16

All men and all women have a responsibility to show respect to one another and understanding in their partnership. No one should subject another person to sexual exploitation or dependence. Rather, sexual partners should accept the responsibility of caring for each other's well-being.

Article 17

In all its cultural and religious varieties, marriage requires love, loyalty and forgiveness and should aim at guaranteeing security and mutual support.

Article 18

Sensible family planning is the responsibility of every couple. The relationship between parents and children should reflect mutual love, respect, appreciation and concern. No parents or other adults should exploit, abuse or maltreat children.

Conclusion

Article 19

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 and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948.

ENDORSEMENT OF THE DECLARATION

The proposed Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities has the endorsement of the following individuals:

I. The InterAction Council Members

- Helmut Schmidt** (Honorary Chairman)
Former Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
- Malcolm Fraser** (Chairman)
Former Prime Minister of Australia
- Andries A. M. van Agt**
Former Prime Minister of the Netherlands
- Anand Panyarachun**
Former Prime Minister of Thailand
- Oscar Arias Sanchez**
Former President of Costa Rica
- Lord Callaghan of Cardiff**
Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom
- Jimmy Carter**
Former President of the United States
- Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado**
Former President of Mexico
- Kurt Furgler**
Former President of Switzerland
- Valery Giscard d'Estaing**
Former President of France
- Felipe Gonzalez Marquez**
Former Prime Minister of Spain
- Mikhail S. Gorbachev**
Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and President of the
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
- Selim Hoss**
Former Prime Minister of Lebanon
- Kenneth Kaunda**
Former President of Zambia
- Lee Kuan Yew**
Former Prime Minister of Singapore
- Kiichi Miyazawa**
Former Prime Minister of Japan
- Misael Pastrana Borrero**
Former President of Colombia (deceased in August)
- Shimon Peres**
Former Prime Minister of Israel
- Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo**
Former Prime Minister of Portugal
- Jose Sarney**
Former President of Brazil

Shin Hyon Hwak

Former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea

Kalevi Sorsa

Former Prime Minister of Finland

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

Former Prime Minister of Canada

Ola Ullsten

Former Prime Minister of Sweden

George Vassiliou

Former President of Cyprus

Franz Vranitzky

Former President of Austria

II. Supporters

Ali Alatas, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Indonesia

Abdulaziz Al-Quraishi, former Chairman of SAMA

Lester Brown, President, Worldwatch Institute

Andre Chouraqui, Professor in Israel

John B. Cobb Jr., Claremont School of Theology

Takako Doi, President, Japan Socialist Democratic Party

Kan Kato, President, Chiba University of Commerce

Henry A. Kissinger, Former U.S. Secretary of State

Teddy Kollek, Mayor of Jerusalem

William Laughlin, American entrepreneur

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Federico Mayor, Director-General, UNESCO

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Robert Muller, Rector, University For Peace

Konrad Raiser, World Council of Churches

Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the U.K.

Seijuro Shiokawa, former Ministers of Home Affairs, Education and
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Rene Samuel Sirat, Grand Rabbi of France

Sir Sigmund Sternberg, International Council of Christians and Jews

Masayoshi Takemura, former Finance Minister of Japan

Gaston Thorn, former Prime Minister of Luxembourg

Paul Volcker, Chairman, James D. Wolfensohn Inc.

Carl Friedrich v. Weizsäcker, Scientist

Richard v. Weizsäcker, former President of the Federal Republic of Germany

Mahmoud Zakzouk, Minister of Religion, Egypt

III. Participants (in preparatory meetings in Vienna, Austria in March 1996 and April 1997) and special guests (at the 15th Plenary Session in Noordwijk, The Netherlands in June 1997)

Hans Kueng, Tübingen University (academic advisor to the project)
Thomas Axworthy, CRB Foundation (academic advisor to the project)
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A.A. Mughram Al-Ghamdi, The King Fahad Academy
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Seiken Sugiura, House of Representatives of Japan
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