

TOWARDS AN EGALITARIAN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

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PART A. CENTRAL ISSUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

The setting of environmental ethics

Adjusting the relationship between humans and nature is one of the most fundamental issues we face and must deal with today. With the increasing deterioration of ecological systems on which human beings rely and the aggravation of the environmental crisis, human beings have realized that we cannot rely on economic and judicial methods alone to solve the problems of environmental pollution and ecological imbalances; we must also appeal to human beings' limitless internal ethical resources. Only after we have adopted an appropriate attitude towards nature and have established a new ethical relationship between human beings and nature will we be able to love and respect nature automatically as well as conscientiously; and only with the guidance of such love and respect can we successfully deal with the issues of environmental pollution and ecological imbalances.

What is environmental ethics?

Environmental ethics is a new sub-discipline of philosophy that deals with the ethical problems surrounding environmental protection. It aims to provide ethical justification and moral motivation for the cause of global environmental protection.

There are several distinctive features of environmental ethics that deserve our attention.

First, environmental ethics is extended. Traditional ethics mainly concerns intra-human duties, especially duties among contemporaries. Environmental ethics extends the scope of ethical concerns beyond one's community and nation to include not only all people everywhere, but also animals and the whole of nature – the biosphere – both now and beyond the imminent future to include future generations.

Second, environmental ethics is interdisciplinary. There are many overlapping concerns and areas of consensus among environmental ethics, environmental politics, environmental economics, environmental sciences and environmental literature, for example. The distinctive perspectives and methodologies of these disciplines provide important inspiration for environmental ethics, and environmental ethics offers value foundations for these disciplines. They reinforce, influence and support each other.

Third, environmental ethics is plural. From the moment it was born, environmental ethics has been an area in which different ideas and perspectives compete with each other. Anthropocentrism, animal liberation/rights theory, biocentrism and ecocentrism all provide unique and, in some sense, reasonable ethical justifications for environmental protection. Their approaches are different, but their goals are by and large the same, and they have reached this consensus: it is everyone's duty to protect the environment. The basic ideas of environmental ethics also find support from, and are embodied in, various well-established cultural traditions. The pluralism of theories and multicultural perspectives is critical for environmental ethics to retain its vitality.

Fourth, environmental ethics is global. Ecological crisis is a global issue. Environmental pollution does not respect national boundaries. No country can deal with this issue alone. To cope with the global environmental crisis, human beings must reach some value consensus and cooperate with each other at the personal, national, regional, multinational and global levels. Global environmental protection depends on global governance. An environmental ethic is, therefore, typically a global ethic with a global perspective.

Fifth, environmental ethics is revolutionary. At the level of ideas, environmental ethics challenges the dominant and deep-rooted anthropocentrism of modern mainstream ethics and extends the object of our duty to future generations and non-human beings. At the

practical level, environmental ethics forcefully critiques the materialism, hedonism and consumerism accompanying modern capitalism, and calls instead for a 'green lifestyle' that is harmonious with nature. It searches for an economic arrangement that is sensitive to Earth's limits and to concerns for quality of life. In the political arena, it advocates a more equitable international economic and political order that is based on the principles of democracy, global justice and universal human rights. It argues for pacifism and against an arms race.

In short, as the theoretical representation of a newly emerging moral idea and value orientation, environmental ethics is the fullest extension of human ethics. It calls on us to think and act locally as well as globally. It calls for a new, deeper moral consciousness.

The modern construction of environmental ethics

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed an ecological crisis brought about by industrial civilization. This crisis was composed of environmental pollution (such as air pollution, water pollution, soil pollution, toxic chemical pollution, solid waste pollution), resource shortages (such as shortages of energy, cultivated land, minerals and fresh water) and ecological imbalances (such as the rapid decrease of forest and biodiversity, the rapid growth of population and the desertification of land the world over).

The gloomy prospects of such a situation were a major concern for many people then. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) revealed the life-threatening nature of chemical pesticides and questioned the dominating concept of conquering nature. Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) brought to light the pressures that the population explosion put on nature. The series of reports documented by the Club of Rome, especially its first report, *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972), sounded a warning against the myth of limitless growth. Earth Day was born in 1971, with more than two million people in the United States demonstrating against pollution and championing the earth. In the same year, Greenpeace launched its campaign against nuclear weapons and in favour of the environment. The first United Nations environmental conference was held in Stockholm in 1972, which symbolized the universal awakening of environmental consciousness worldwide. The pace of establishing national and international laws concerning environmental protection was dramatically accelerated during the years that followed.

These events paved the way for the birth of environmental ethics.

Three pioneering papers on environmental ethics appeared in 1973. The Australian philosopher Richard Routley's paper, 'Is there a need for a new, an environmental ethic?', initiated the modern project of constructing environmental ethics. Peter Singer's 'Animal liberation' opened a new chapter of the animal ethics and animal rights movement. And the Norwegian deep ecologist Arne Naess's article, 'The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement', widened the scope of environmental ethics. With the publication of American philosopher Holmes Rolston's milestone paper, 'Is there an ecological ethic?' in the mainstream academic journal *Ethics* in 1975, and the launching of the academic journal *Environmental Ethics* in 1979, environmental ethics as a sub-discipline of philosophy was firmly established.

In response to the challenges of non-anthropocentric environmental ethics, many philosophers tried to redetermine and refine the implications of traditional ethics on environmental protection. Australian philosopher John Passmore's *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (1974) reaffirmed the value of Western traditional morality. Bryan Norton's paper, 'Environmental ethics and weak anthropocentrism' (1984), emphasized the difference between felt preference and reasoned preference. Mark Sagoff's *Economy of the Earth* (1988) highlighted the non-economic value of nature. Eugene Hargrove's *Foundations of Environmental Ethics* (1989) set the aesthetical value of nature as the foundation of environmental protection. Their works deepened the study of environmental ethics.

The environmental problems of most developed countries had been well dealt with by the beginning of the 1980s. However, environmental pollution and ecological crisis were spreading rapidly across the world. The environmental situations in developing countries have become worse and worse, and the shadow of resource shortage and nuclear waste hangs over the world. The population boom is threatening earth's carrying capacity. The rapid disappearance of species and forests is undermining life, both human and non-human. The ozone hole and global warming are becoming a nightmare.

Facing such a worrying situation, international groups initiated a wave of campaigns for environmental protection. The *World Conservation Strategy* (IUCN, 1980), *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987), *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN et al., 1991), and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit

Conference and the blueprint of action that came from it, *Agenda 21* (UN, 1994), were evidence of this new wave. The UN today is putting more energy into dealing with global environmental issues. Worldwide, NGOs concerned with environmental issues are playing ever more active roles in protecting the environment. Environmental laws have been established at national, regional and international levels, and most countries have adopted a policy of sustainable development. Protecting the environment has become humanity's common cause.

To keep pace with and participate more effectively in the world environmental protection movement, environmental ethicists have been noticeably refining and broadening their work since the beginning of the 1990s. A few new trends stand out.

First, more than ever before, environmental ethicists are focussing on the practical application of environmental ethics in policy-making. They are expressing a desire to participate actively in resolving environmental problems and to bring environmental ethics firmly into the ongoing dialogue about environmental issues in the world beyond the academy. These environmental ethicists therefore try to make environmental ethics more practical and policy-oriented, and directed towards problem-solving. They focus on helping the environmental community present stronger ethical arguments in support of environmental protection policies.

Second, environmental ethicists from different schools of thought, while continuing to build on their theoretical repertoire, are making efforts to communicate with each other more effectively and to integrate their actions. Almost all textbooks and anthologies on environmental ethics published since the 1990s take an all-inclusive and plural stance, and try to embrace the wisdom offered by other fields and different schools of thought.

Third, many environmental ethicists are trying to approach environmental ethics from new perspectives and trying to explore new ways to develop environmental ethics further. Postmodernism, feminism, pragmatism, phenomenology and virtue ethics are the most promising candidates to which many scholars appeal.

Fourth, numerous efforts have been made to recognize and understand the resources that different cultural traditions (such as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism) have to offer environmental ethics. The construction of an environmental ethics with a global and multicultural perspective is under way.

Fifth, environmental justice is becoming one of the major topics of environmental ethics. Problems of environmental justice came to the fore at the end of the 1980s, when researchers showed that in the USA it was always people of colour who lived near landfills and waste incinerators. Further studies found that the consequences of environmental degradation are often borne disproportionately by racially and economically disadvantaged groups, and this happens both within and across countries. With developed countries transferring more and more heavily polluted industries and shipping billions of tons of toxic waste to developing countries, environmental imperialism and toxic imperialism have become the focus of many environmental ethicists, especially those from developing countries.

A diversified discourse

Environmental ethics is a diversified discourse. In modern society, it comprises four schools of thought: enlightened (or weak) anthropocentrism, animal liberation/rights theory, biocentrism and ecocentrism (which includes the land ethic, deep ecology and the theory of nature's value). Diversity implies divergence and difference.

Different ideas of environmental ethics

The four schools of environmental ethics disagree firstly on the scope of the duty humans have towards others.

From an anthropocentric point of view, humans have a moral duty only towards one another; any duty they seem to have towards other species or entities is really only an indirect duty towards other people. There is no ethical implication in the relationship between humans and nature. However, modern anthropocentrism tries to redefine the meaning of authentic human interests. Bryan Norton (1984) distinguishes reasoned preference from felt preference. He argues that any ethical theory that does not consider any constraint is needed on felt preference is flawed – that is, that not every preference is morally justified – and that only an environmental ethical theory that justifies and critically examines reasoned preference according to a reasonable worldview is acceptable. Tim Hayward (1998) also objects to focusing on human interests to the exclusion, or at the expense, of the interests of other species. Many enlightened anthropocentrists even acknowledge the intrinsic value of nature.

Animal liberation/rights theory expands the object of duty to include all animals (at least all sentient animals). All people agree that cruelty to animals is immoral. This is not because cruelty to animals will lead to cruelty to humans, animal liberationists argue, but because animals can suffer. They contend that the pleasure and pain that animals experience are morally relevant, and that sentience is the necessary and sufficient condition for a creature to receive moral consideration (Singer, 1975). From the point of view of animal rights theory, the only right way to treat animals is to treat them as ends in themselves, never as mere means, because animals, like us, have rights that precede other's interests. Animals have rights that are based on either their interests (weak animal rights theory; Warren, 1983) or their being the subject-of-a-life (strong animal rights theory; Regan, 1983). As the holder of rights, animals deserve our respect.

Biocentrism maintains that all life forms are 'moral patients' – entities to which we should accord moral consideration. We therefore have a duty towards all forms of life. As Albert Schweitzer (1923) wrote:

The essence of goodness is to maintain and cherish life, and the essence of evil is to destroy and damage life. All living beings have the will to live, and all living beings with the will to live are sacred, interrelated and of equal value. It is, therefore, an ethical imperative for us to respect and help all life forms.

Paul Taylor also argues that all organisms are teleological centres of life, pursuing their own good in their own way (Taylor, 1986). Taylor maintains that it is their *telos* (the Greek word for 'end', 'purpose' or 'goal') that gives each individual organism inherent worth, and that this worth is possessed equally by all living organisms because all individual living beings have a *telos* and a good of their own – a good as vital to them as a human good is to a human. The equal inherent worth of all living beings warrants according them equal moral status: therefore, we must respect all living organisms. Robin Attfield reaches the same conclusion from the approach of consequentialism (Attfield, 1983). He argues that an organism's ability to flourish and to exercise its basic capacities give it intrinsic value, for which we must extend moral consideration to it. Attfield's position is that an organism that has the ability to flourish and to develop has an interest in doing

so, and that we have a duty to maximize the interests or utilities of any organism, regardless of its species (Attfield, 1983; *see also* p. 72). Accordingly, we have an obligation to care for the well-being of all living organisms.

Ecocentrism dramatically expands the definition of what is a 'moral patient' to include nature as a whole. The Leopoldian land ethic (from the United States ecologist, forester and environmentalist, Aldo Leopold) tries to change the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of land-community to plain member and citizen of it. This implies respect for our fellow-members and respect for the community as such. Leopold summarizes the land ethic in the maxim: 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (1966, p. 262).

There are two notable basic ethical principles in deep ecology. The ecosphere egalitarianism principle says that all organisms and entities in the ecosphere, as parts of the interrelated whole, are equal in intrinsic value. And all things in the ecosphere have an equal right to live and blossom and to reach their own individual forms of unfolding and self-realization. The principle of Self-realization holds that, for the morally mature person, the authentic self is the Self that is at one with nature, not the isolated self that focuses on egoistical satisfaction. The process of Self-realization is one of enlarging our notions of ourselves to include identification with nature. To harm nature is to harm ourselves, and to defend earth is self-defence (Naess, 1989).

Rolston's theory of nature's value derives our *duties to* nature from the *value in* nature. According to this theory, nature is a kind of subject with teleology, creativity, intelligence and a capacity to value. Value is the inherent property of evolutionary nature. Instrumental value, intrinsic value and systemic value exist objectively in nature. These values in nature impose on us the imperative to care for the earth. The novelty in the human emergence is that class altruism can coexist with class self-interest, sentiments directed not simply at one's own species but at other species. Humans, therefore, should be Earth's moral overseers (Rolston, 1989).

Approaches to environmental ethics

Different schools of environmental ethics use different ethical methodologies. Anthropocentrism directly applies modern, dominant, Western ethics to environmental ethical issues. It typically justifies its ethical norms in terms of utilitarianism and deontology.

There are, of course, implicit ties between modern Western ethics and non-anthropocentrism. However, at the meta-ethics level, the latter refines some of the basic premises of the former. Animal liberation theory is based on utilitarianism, but it encompasses as utilities animals' pleasures and freedom from suffering. Robin Attfield's consequentialist biocentrism also adheres to the methodology of modern consequentialism (1983). Weak animal rights theory tries to bring utilitarianism and deontology together and deduce animals' rights from their interests, while Tom Regan's strong animal rights theory and Paul Taylor's biocentric egalitarianism both follow Kantian deontological tradition. Whereas strong animal rights theory enlarges the Kantian 'kingdom of ends' to include animals, biocentric egalitarianism further extends it to include all life forms.

The Leopoldian land ethic is a kind of communitarianism, emphasizing the ethical ties between the land community and its members. Its philosophical foundation is Humean emotionalist ethics. The Self-realization view of deep ecology seems close to that of New-Hegelianism of Thomas H. Green and Francis H. Bradley. What makes deep ecology distinctive is its transformation of the New-Hegelianist 'Social-self' into the 'Ecological-self'. Deep ecology also gets its inspirations from Baruch de Spinoza's ethics and Buddhist ethics. The Rolstonian theory of nature's value takes the form of axiological ethics, deriving our duties to nature from the ontological reality of intrinsic value of nature.

In addition, anthropocentrism, animal liberation/rights theory and biocentrism place relatively greater emphasis on the value and well-being of individual life. They are individualism-oriented. Ecocentrism focuses on the integrity of the ecosystem and the value of species. It tends to be holistic.

Different perspectives on environmental ethics

From a cultural perspective, *anthropocentrism* has strong spiritual ties with today's Western culture, prioritizing the economic value of nature. It is conservative in the sense that it tends to maintain (and to reform, in a sense) the politico-economic world order, and to defend the dominant values of modern industrial civilization.

Non-anthropocentrism seems to be more reasonable in the context of non-Western cultural traditions (such as Daoism, Buddhism and Native American religions) and the marginalized values of modern

civilization (such as romanticism, organism and transcendentalism). It pays more attention to the non-economic values of nature. It also criticizes and challenges the present unequal politico-economic system and dominant modern values (such as consumerism, modernism and free market environmentalism). It aims to establish a postmodern green civilization.

While most environmental ethicists in developed countries highlight anthropocentrism as the ideological origin of the modern ecological crisis, their counterparts in most developing countries list environmental egoism (including environmental imperialism) as the main source of modern environmental problems (Guha, 1989).

Consensus regarding environmental ethics

Though there are many debates about the philosophical foundations of environmental ethics, we can find much consensus at normative and practical levels among environmental ethicists (Yang, 2000).

Three normative principles of environmental ethics

(1) Principles of environmental justice

Environmental justice is the minimum ethical stance of environmental ethics. There are two dimensions to environmental justice. Distributive environmental justice concerns the equal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, whereas participatory environmental justice focuses on opportunities to participate in decision-making. While domestic environmental justice is easily understood and accepted, the institutionalizing of global (international) environmental justice remains a challenge to global society. The seventeen principles of environmental justice issued at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 is a good starting point for environmental ethics (*see* Appendix, pp. 43–45).

(2) Principle of intergenerational equality

The principle of intergenerational equality is an extension of that of equality. Equal rights constitute the core of the principle of equality. The rights to life, liberty and happiness are basic human rights shared by everyone, future generations as well as the present generation. Every generation should leave the following generation an equal opportunity to live a happy life. Thus it is the duty of any given generation to

bequeath to their descendants not only a just politico-economic system, but also a healthy and generative earth.

(3) Principle of respect for nature

Though they may come from different perspectives, most environmental ethicists agree that we have a duty to conserve and protect the integrity of the ecosystem and its biodiversity. No one doubts that the prosperity of human beings depends on the prosperity of nature. Human beings are part of nature, and the human economy is a sub-system of nature's economy; the former must fit into the latter and abide by the laws of the latter. Earth is the planet that is our home. This home planet is in crisis now. We must carry out our duty, therefore, to care for it.

Consensus regarding practical issues

Environmental ethics is a typical example of practical ethics. Environmental ethicists have reached greater consensus on practical issues than on moral philosophical issues.

(1) Environmental crisis is the pathology of modern industrial civilization

The environmental crisis is not simply an issue of technology. It is neither because our technology cannot provide enough resources for us to consume nor because we cannot invent more advanced technology to refine the toxic wastes we produce that environmental problems arise. The essence of the modern environmental crisis is about modern civilization and its underlying values. Our ecological crisis is the inevitable outcome of the modern economy's insensitivity to the vulnerability and limits of nature, the mad power struggle of modern politics, modern people's universally equating happiness with material satisfaction, and their overwhelming acceptance of a mechanical and dualist view of nature. It is not this or that part of industrial civilization but industrial civilization itself that is not suitable for this small planet. Therefore, we must smoothly transform industrial civilization into an environment-friendly green (or post-industrial) civilization by reforming the unequal economic system, rectifying the unjust political order, changing the prevailing consumerist lifestyle and rebuilding a reasonable life philosophy that is morally responsible towards others and nature.

(2) Earth is the common wealth of everyone

Earth belongs to all people. No country or group is permitted to threaten the ecological balance. Human beings' common interests come before any state's special interests. To protect our common Earth, developing countries should maintain the necessary balance between economic growth and environmental protection, and developed countries have a duty to reduce the amount of energy and resources they consume. We need to distribute global wealth more equally among nations and to establish a more just international order that is compatible with global environmental protection. Human beings need to learn how to live as a Global Commonwealth on Earth.

(3) Poverty is a kind of pollution

Although excessive affluence puts extensive ecological pressure on the earth, poverty remains a key factor in environmental deterioration, especially at the nation-state level. Poor countries often engage in rapid economic growth in ways that harm their environments. They are obliged to export their natural capital cheaply and excessively in exchange for foreign currency with which they can pay their debts. They are not able to obtain environmental-protection technologies and they lack the financial budget that environmental protection requires. The lowest-income people, especially those living in cities, are exposed to toxic wastes and hazardous chemicals. They have to work in heavily polluted conditions. They are the most vulnerable in the face of environmental catastrophes. In addition, the huge gap between the rich and the poor is incompatible with human morality. Therefore, we must incorporate poverty alleviation into environmental protection and economic development. We need to break the vicious circle of poverty and environmental destruction.

(4) Militarism is one of the major threats to life on earth

War is destructive of human life, non-human life and the environment. Nuclear war will be the end of all life on earth. The massive destruction of the environment caused by military actions across the world is the hardest to heal. The military industry is among the most heavily polluting industries. The arms race not only wastes Earth's limited resources, but also leads to a lack of trust among nations. Some countries have annual military budgets of more than 40 billion US dollars, while to save the tropics, where 70 per cent of non-human species live, would require

only 30 billion US dollars (Wilson, 2002). The deliberate creation of security threats by any nation, driven by militant-industrial corporate groups, must be fiercely resisted. Militarism and environmentalism are mutually exclusive. An environmentalist must be a pacifist.

(5) Environmental justice is the priority issue of environmental ethics

Environmental justice is the new frontier of justice. Unjust social frameworks maintain and reinforce environmental injustice, with the result that the privileged permanently enjoy the benefits of the environment while the disadvantaged bear disproportionately the burdens of the environment. Everyone has the right to a liveable environment. A right to the environment is one of the basic human rights, and everyone and every state has a duty to protect it. International environmental injustice is especially worrisome today. The developed countries should change their policies of transferring heavily polluted industries to developing countries, stop exporting hazardous waste to developing countries and adjust the high-consumption lifestyle of their population. Consensus on global environmental justice is urgently needed.

(6) Environmental ethics should participate actively in environmental decision-making

Most policies have environmental and normative implications. Yet decision-makers are often ignorant of, unclear about or unable to deal with the ethical elements of their decisions. Policies involving prevention and control of pollution, or preservation and restoration of natural areas, are evaluated in terms of economics, politics and ethics. Therefore, environmental ethics plays a great role in decision-making. The environmental ethical dimensions of any given policy should be systematically explored, political powers should be urged to pass environmental protection laws, and people should be encouraged to engage in environmental protection campaigns.

Towards an inclusive environmental ethics

From the perspective of environmental protection, the four schools of thought in environmental ethics are not mutually exclusive, but mutually complementary. They play different and irreplaceable functions in protecting the environment, each with a different intensity and focus. They are the theoretical expressions, respectively, of four moral duties:

our duty to humans, our duty to animals, our duty to all life forms and our duty to nature as a whole. These can be regarded as four moral horizons or moral ideas: anthropocentric, protective of animals, biocentric and ecocentric. The anthropocentric idea is the bottom-line ethic of environmental protection. It falls into the category of duties that are required of us. The other three non-anthropocentric ideas form a higher layer of ethics of environmental protection and can provide additional motivation for people to observe environmental-protection laws. They belong to the category of duties that are expected of us.

Looking forward, only a synergistic environmental ethics that totally adopts and embraces these four environmental ethical ideas is promising. It should retain the necessary intensity and balance between anthropocentrism, animal liberation/rights theory, biocentrism and ecocentrism, and pay enough attention to the wisdom and limitations of each.

PART B. INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

Given the global impact of the environmental crisis, international cooperation is urgently needed if we are to conquer it. With its global perspective, the UN plays a key role in initiating such international actions.

Measures to encourage environmental ethics research

Holding an international conference

Although environmental ethics has developed over nearly thirty years, its development has been asymmetric. In developed countries, it is a relatively mature discipline, and is a mandatory part of the curriculum for many university students who major in disciplines such as forestry, agriculture and environmental management. But in developing countries, environmental ethics is new and challenging for most people. And the institutionalization of environmental ethics takes a long time. In addition, Western environmental ethics is the dominant discourse in the field. The voice of developing countries is difficult to hear. Therefore, an open international forum is needed to bring together scholars from different countries for full exchanges and the communication of different ideas. An international conference on environmental ethics, with a diverse pool of representatives, sponsored and organized by UNESCO, would be most helpful for the development and promulgation of environmental ethics.

Making an International Declaration

After the international conference, several expert working groups could be established. To present the outcomes of their work, these groups should draft a number of documents, including:

1. a general declaration on environmental ethics;
2. a declaration on an environmental ethics for environmental management;
3. a declaration on an environmental ethics for agriculture;
4. a declaration on an environmental ethics for forestry;
5. a declaration on an environmental ethics for engineering; and
6. a declaration on an animal-protection ethics.

Establishing a committee on environmental ethics

A World Committee on Environmental Ethics needs to be established at UNESCO, with UNESCO Member States setting up individual National Committees on Environmental Ethics to evaluate major policies and projects that could have a great impact on the environment, and to assess their country's environmental situation from the perspective of environmental ethics. The membership of the National Committees should include scholars, professors, teachers, officers, citizens, indigenous people and representatives of environmental NGOs. The National Committee could operate either as an independent NGO or as a sub-institution of the country's environmental protection agency.

Compiling an environmental ethics report

With the leadership of UNESCO, a global environmental ethics report should be compiled every five years. The mission of the report would be to evaluate the global progress of education in environmental ethics and the study of environmental ethics over the previous five years, and to provide guidance for the teaching and study of environmental ethics for the following five years. The report should be published in the six official languages of the UN.

Founding an environmental ethics award

To encourage and reward those who devote themselves to the practice, education and study of environmental ethics, the UN should create an environmental ethics award that could be awarded to ten people every three years.

Education

Overcoming the global environmental crisis depends ultimately on how humankind's values, attitudes and behaviours change. Education is critical for the structural transformation of industrial society. UNESCO plays a key role in encouraging Member States, especially developing countries, to advance environmental education and to incorporate environmental ethics into their educational systems.

Formulating a syllabus of environmental ethics

To lead and direct the teaching of environmental ethics, UNESCO could formulate a flexible syllabus of environmental ethics for undergraduates, recommending two or three textbooks and encouraging member-states to translate them into their native languages.

Cooperating with education services of Member States

Education officers must recognize the importance of values and engage in promoting environmental ethics. To promote the teaching of environmental ethics, UNESCO should establish a stable mechanism of dialogue and information-sharing among the education sectors of its Member States.

Training environmental ethics teachers

Environmental ethics teachers bear a responsibility to propagate the ideas of environmental ethics. It is extremely important to deepen their understanding of environmental issues and to improve their skills in teaching environmental ethics. Those who are able to profit from advanced training classes should commit to offering environmental ethics classes at their universities under UNESCO supervision.

Capacity-building actions for Member States

The capacity of countries to deal with environmental crisis is different worldwide. Compared with developed countries, the situations of developing countries are worrisome. Education is the most important way to empower developing countries. The following measures would be helpful:

1. Established an environmental education (especially environmental ethics education) programme in developing countries.
2. Urge and help the media (of developing as well as developed countries) to pay more attention to environmental issues.

3. Set up more international training programmes, such as the LEAD (Leadership in Environment and Development) programme in London.
4. Help developing countries to find more efficient ways to use their energy and resources, and to remit part of their debts.
5. Call for people in both developed and developing countries to live environment-friendly lifestyles; the consumption ethic of reducing, reusing and recycling should be universally accepted and practised.
6. Establish a safer international order so that most countries are able to spend less money on military programmes.

Some complicated issues

International environmental justice and global warming

Global warming is the most severe challenge confronting humanity in the twenty-first century. Effective ways of dealing with this problem include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, restoring forests and transforming the structure of the energy system. Ethical debates over the principles of distributing greenhouse gas emission quotas are among the most heated in environmental ethics, although the ‘polluter pays’ principle has been generally accepted. Peter Singer’s utilitarian principles of helping others (Singer, 1972) and Henry Shue’s three principles of equity (Shue, 1999) have also been universally welcomed. However, there is disagreement over the exact meanings and practical implications of these principles. A general framework of international environmental justice has yet to be established. Some basic points of consensus on international environmental justice must be reached, as it is only on a foundation of such consensus that international negotiations concerning the distribution of greenhouse gas emission quotas can be fruitful.

Biodiversity and the value of nature

The rapid loss of biodiversity is threatening the foundations of life. Humans cannot bear the accelerated extinction of species any more. International society must take further measures to save endangered species and preserve biodiversity. Given that most endangered species inhabit developing countries and these countries do not have the capacity to save these endangered species by themselves, the UN must call upon other countries to fulfil their responsibilities to save

common human property by offering the necessary support to these countries. Environmental ethics can help people to understand clearly and comprehensively the economic as well as non-economic values of biodiversity. UNESCO can foster consensus among its Member States regarding values in biodiversity and nature, and can design and initiate a global Marshall Plan to save and protect global biodiversity.

Environmental ethics and sustainable development

Although there is disagreement over the meaning of sustainable development, most countries have accepted sustainable development as their basic policy. The overlapping areas of consensus between sustainable development and environmental ethics are obvious: the need for environmental justice among the present generation (especially to eliminate absolute poverty), the need to care for future generations and the need to live harmoniously with nature. Only once human society gets on track with regard to achieving sustainable development can we deal successfully with the challenges of global warming, diminishing biodiversity and world hunger. The UN must continue to encourage its Member States to find ways to achieve sustainable development that meet their own special requirements as well as the concerns of environmental ethics. While *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) has comprehensively explored the political, economic and practical implications of sustainable development, UNESCO must clearly expound the moral commitment that sustainable development requires and establish an economic and social index of sustainable development.

Environmentalism and pacifism

The last thing human beings should do is expend huge amounts of resources on studying and making weapons of mass destruction. Security, especially environmental security, does not come from hegemonic militant power, but from a just and peaceful international order. As war is a massive violation of humans' right to life, and causes massive destruction of the environment, avoidance of war should be the primary concern of environmental ethics. Democratic countries should apply their domestic political principles to relations with other countries and allow themselves to be subject to the authority of the UN. The policy that might is right, which prevailed in colonial times, must be condemned and abandoned. The UN and its Member States must aim to construct and strengthen the international legal and judicial system and to arbitrate any

disputes among its Member States through this system to avoid military conflict. Only a peaceful international order can foster cooperation among countries in dealing with the global environmental crisis. The close connection between environmental protection and peace must be recognized. All countries have a responsibility to spend more money on environmental programmes rather than on military programmes.

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APPENDIX

Principles of Environmental Justice

(Issued at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 1991. Adopted 27 October 1991, Washington, DC.)

We the People of Color, gathered together at this multinational First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and thereby of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to [sic] the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water and food.
5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination to all peoples.
6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable

- to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
 8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
 9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
 10. Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
 11. Environmental justice must recognize the special legal and natural relationship of Native peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
 12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.
 13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
 14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
 15. Environmental justice opposes military occupations, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures.
 16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.