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ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PEACE

Letter dated 9 October 1989 from the Permanent Representative
of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you, together with pertinent information, the text of the Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development, which was adopted at San José, Costa Rica, during the Conference in Search of the True Meaning of Peace, held from 25 to 30 June 1989.

On instructions from my Government, I wish to request you to have this letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 21.

(Signed) Carlos José GUTIERREZ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

ANNEX

Explanatory memorandum

Costa Rica hosted the Conference in Search of the True Meaning of Peace, held from 25 to 30 June 1989 and attended by hundreds of participants from many countries.

Present at the Conference were eminent persons involved in the study of this important question, which is attracting increasing interest from day to day. Noteworthy among the participants were Mr. Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica. His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, Monsignor Román Arrieta Archbishop of San José, who read out a message from His Holiness John Paul II, as well as Mr. Robert Muller, a member of the Council of the University for Peace and former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the observance of the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, Mr. Jaime Montalvo, Rector of the University for Peace, and Mr. Rodrigo Carazo, President of the Council of the University for Peace.

Persons of different creeds, political orientation and professional training decided to come together to take action that would have a cumulative impact, and drafted an agreement entitled the Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development, which was enthusiastically adopted by the participants in the Conference.

The basic premise was the principle that all men, women, young people and children have a responsibility to present and future generations to commit themselves to strengthening and working to establish measures that will protect and preserve the sound and safe environment that is the inherent right of every human being.

The Government of Costa Rica welcomed this Declaration and is now submitting it to the General Assembly as the annex to the following draft resolution:

Declaration of Human Responsibilities for
Peace and Sustainable Development

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the report submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with resolution 42/13 of 28 October 1987 on the achievements of the International Year of Peace,

Taking note also that it was one of the achievements of the International Year of Peace that activities to promote peace took place in scientific institutions and centres of learning,

1. Expresses its satisfaction at the convening of the Conference in Search of the True Meaning of Peace;

2. Endorses the Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development, which is annexed to this resolution.

Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and
Sustainable Development

PREAMBLE

Considering that both the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development 1/ and the United Nations Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond 2/ have recognized the imminent danger threatening the existence of the Earth as a result of war and environmental destruction;

Recognizing that the world has been evolving from a group of separate communities towards interdependence and the beginnings of a world community, a process reflecting global concerns, common goals and shared ideals;

Recalling that, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable human rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world;

Considering the aspirations of all the members of the human family to realize their potential to the maximum through the cultural, social, political and economic development of individuals and of communities, recognized in the Declaration on the Right to Development 3/ as an inalienable human right;

Recognizing the necessity of ensuring the full and equal participation of women and men in the decision-making processes relating to the promotion of peace and development;

Bearing in mind that the international community has proclaimed that people have a sacred right to peace 4/ and has recommended that national and international organizations should promote peace; 5/

Observing that the international community has recognized the fundamental right of human beings to live in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being; 6/

1/ Accepted by General Assembly resolution 42/187 of 11 December 1987.

2/ Adopted by General Assembly resolution 42/186 of 11 December 1987.

3/ General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986.

4/ Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace, General Assembly resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984.

5/ Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace, General Assembly resolution 33/73 of 15 December 1978.

6/ Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (the Stockholm Declaration), 16 June 1972.

Bearing in mind the challenge posed by the growing imbalances in the dynamic relationship between population, resources and the environment;

Considering that the General Assembly has established that all human rights and fundamental freedoms are indivisible and interdependent; 7/

Aware that the attainment of those rights has been recognized as being the responsibility of individuals as well as of States; 8/

Concerned because the efforts of human society thus far have not been sufficient to achieve the full recognition of those rights;

Considering that the United Nations has emphasized that wars begin in the minds and through the actions of human beings 9/ and that the threats to continuing development and the conservation of the environment arise from diverse but interrelated forms of human behaviour; 10/

Bearing in mind that the General Assembly has determined that, in order to ensure the survival of natural systems and an adequate level of living for all, human activity should be reoriented towards the goals of sustainable development; 11/

Considering that the present generation, having reached a crossroads where new challenges and decisions must be faced, bears the immediate responsibility for its own development and for the survival of future generations, so that they may consciously constitute a single world, just, peaceful and based on co-operation with nature;

Convinced, therefore, that there is an urgent need for a greater awareness of the unity of life and of the special character of each of the expressions of life, and for a more profound human sense of responsibility and a reorientation of human thoughts, feelings and actions;

7/ General Assembly resolution 37/199 of 18 December 1982.

8/ See World Charter for Nature: General Assembly resolution 37/7 of 28 October 1982, and resolution 38/124 of 16 December 1983.

9/ Declaration on the Preparation of Societies for Life in Peace: General Assembly resolution 33/73 of 15 December 1978; Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, preamble, paragraph 1.

10/ General Assembly resolutions 37/7 of 28 October 1982; 42/186 of 11 December 1987 and 42/187 of 11 December 1987.

11/ General Assembly resolutions 42/186 of 11 December 1987 and 42/187 of 11 December 1987.

Considering that this Declaration can contribute to the achievement of this reorientation and can inspire many practical applications at the level of the individual, the family and the community, as well as at the national and international levels;

In accordance with all the foregoing considerations, the Government of Costa Rica offers the present Declaration of Human Responsibilities for Peace and Sustainable Development as an instrument for reflection and compromise.

CHAPTER I. UNITY OF THE WORLD

Article 1. Everything which exists is part of an interdependent universe. All living creatures depend on each other for their existence, well-being and development.

Article 2. All human beings are an inseparable part of nature, on which culture and human civilization have been built.

Article 3. Life on Earth is abundant and diverse. It is sustained by the unhindered functioning of natural systems which ensure the provision of energy, air, water and nutrients for all living creatures. Every manifestation of life on Earth is unique and essential and must therefore be respected and protected without regard to its apparent value to human beings.

CHAPTER II. UNITY OF THE HUMAN FAMILY

Article 4. All human beings are an inseparable part of the human family and depend on each other for their existence, well-being and development. Every human being is a unique expression and manifestation of life and has a separate contribution to make to life on Earth. Each human being has fundamental and inalienable rights and freedoms, without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic status or any other social situation.

Article 5. All human beings have the same basic needs and the same fundamental aspirations to be satisfied. All individuals have the right to development, the purpose of which is to promote attainment of the full potential of each person.

CHAPTER III. THE ALTERNATIVES FACING MANKIND AND UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY

Article 6. Responsibility is an inherent aspect of any relation in which human beings are involved. This capacity to act responsibly in a conscious, independent, unique and personal manner is an inalienable creative quality of every human being. There is no limit to its scope or depth other than that established by each person for himself. The more activities human beings take on and become involved in, the more they will grow and derive strength.

Article 7. Of all living creatures, human beings have the unique capacity to decide consciously whether they are protecting or harming the quality and conditions of life on Earth. In reflecting on the fact that they belong to the natural world and occupy a special position as participants in the evolution of natural processes, people can develop, on the basis of selflessness, compassion and love, a sense of universal responsibility towards the world as an integral whole, towards the protection of nature and the promotion of the highest potential for change, with a view to creating those conditions which will enable them to achieve the highest level of spiritual and material well-being.

Article 8. At this critical time in history, the alternatives facing mankind are crucial. In directing their actions towards the attainment of progress in society, human beings have frequently forgotten the inherent role they play in the natural world and the indivisible human family, and their basic needs for a healthy life. Excessive consumption, abuse of the environment and aggression between peoples have brought the natural processes of the Earth to a critical stage which threatens their survival. By reflecting on these issues, individuals will be capable of discerning their responsibility and thus reorienting their conduct towards peace and sustainable development.

CHAPTER IV. REORIENTATION TOWARDS PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Article 9. Given that all forms of life are unique and essential, that all human beings have the right to development and that both peace and violence are the product of the human mind, it is from the human mind that a sense of responsibility to act and think in a peaceful manner will develop. Through peace-oriented awareness, individuals will understand the nature of those conditions which are necessary for their well-being and development.

Article 10. Being mindful of their sense of responsibility towards the human family and the environment in which they live and of the need to think and act in a peaceful manner, human beings have the obligation to act in a way that is consistent with the observance of and respect for inherent human rights and to ensure that their consumption of resources is in keeping with the satisfaction of the basic needs of all.

Article 11. When members of the human family recognize that they are responsible to themselves and to present and future generations for the conservation of the planet, as protectors of the natural world and promoters of its continued development, they will be obliged to act in a rational manner in order to ensure sustainable life.

Article 12. Human beings have a continuing responsibility when setting up, taking part in or representing social units, associations and institutions, whether private or public. In addition, all such entities have a responsibility to promote peace and sustainability, and to put into practice the educational goals which are conducive to that end. These goals include the fostering of awareness of the interdependence of human beings among themselves and with nature and the universal responsibility of individuals to solve the problems which they have engendered

through their attitudes and actions in a manner that is consistent with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Let us be faithful to the privilege of our responsibility.
