

# Declaration on our Common Future

Civil Society 2022 Declaration (Very first Draft)

In one of the very few times in the history of humankind, the prospects of the next generations are far worse than they were for previous ones. Young people are in the streets and in courts to protest the most heinous of crimes, that of stealing their dreams, hopes, and future. The best available science demonstrates very clearly that the state of the global environment is deteriorating rapidly. Fundamental transformative changes are needed in the legal, economic, social, political, and technological spheres to restore our planet to a stable and well-functioning state. This challenge is unprecedented in terms of scope and scale. Rising to the challenge is only possible by reaching an international agreement that recognizes the most vital common denominator – the system that supports life on Earth, of which we are all part, that connects us all and on which we all depend. A half-century after the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, we call upon UNEP and all Member States to drive a paradigm shift that recognizes the common ground upon which we can build a safe and sustainable future for human civilization. To this purpose, we present the following four points for a transformative Declaration:

**1 – Recognize the Right to a Healthy Environment.** There are no human rights on a dead planet. All human rights ultimately depend on the capacity to live in an ecologically healthy, well-functioning global environment. **The 2022 Declaration should recognize the right of everybody to live in a healthy environment.** This right should be the basis of an effort to anchor the principles of not only **Non-Regression**, but – more importantly - **Progression** in all spheres of environmental law. Non-regression would prevent reducing the level of environmental protection worldwide. Progression would ensure that from 2022 onwards, all environmental laws and regulations will increase the level of ambition and effectiveness. This recognition would further realize **intergenerational equity**, hereby ensuring that the decisions and actions of present generations do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

**2 – Define a Global Public Interest.** A stable climate is a manifestation of a well-functioning Earth System, which, in turn, relies on a resilient and well-functioning biosphere. This is a common good that belongs to all generations, and not just a “Common Concern”. This truly “Common Good” must be the founding element in the reconstruction of a global environmental governance system that is consistent with the indivisibility of the global system that supports life on this planet - the Earth System. This is a public good that should be managed by bold public authority: UNEP and the Member States. With the scientific definition of the “Planetary Boundaries” that define the well-functioning state of the Earth System, which is built on a stable climate and a healthy biosphere, we have the tools to define the “global common” that must become the object of a common institutionalized governance system, becoming the central axis to operationalize the ‘Right to a Healthy Environment’.

**3 – Build Back Better/Green Recovery.** Our current economic system values the wrong things and ignores or under-estimates the value of nature, only recognizing value in dead trees, and commodifying biodiversity. Our common future demands an economy in which the work of nature that produces and maintains healthy eco-systems and a stable climate is recognized and respected, rather than being destroyed or degraded for the creation of wealth for human societies. With the recognition of the Earth System as a “Global Common”, we can internalize the value of this work for human societies, which today is considered an ‘externality’. This is a game-changer in our society: we can value the work of nature without destroying it and include the activities that restore and maintain a “safe and healthy environment” in the GDP of each country, enabling each actor to be encouraged to produce benefits for the common good! This will enable building a more equitable and inclusive international society that makes climate justice happen and restores and maintains a healthy biosphere.

**4 – Commit clearly to an innovative pathway for the post-2022 period.** Taking inspiration from the process that designed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **the 2022 Declaration should define clear steps and milestones for the adoption of a universal environmental framework.** This framework would recognize a set of legal principles of environmental protection, as recommended by Annex 1 of the 1987 Brundtland Report entitled *Our Common Future*, and develop a package of goals, targets, indicators, means of implementation and monitoring mechanisms that will be defined by 2025.