

Protecting Our Common Climate System: Earth Governance for a Sustainable Future

*A joint Inter-faith and Values Appeal to the
2024 Conference of States Parties to the Climate Change Convention (COP 29)**

As people of religious, faith-based and associated values who are committed to a stable climate and sustainable future, we appeal to the States Parties to the Climate Change Convention to take the opportunity of the 2024 Conference of States Parties (COP 29) in November to build **effective global governance to facilitate the high level of cooperative action required to protect the climate.**

With global temperature rise already causing wide-spread and devastating disasters, and with the tipping point for a global climate catastrophe imminent, it is evident that relying on national commitments in a competitive economic and political environment is not working.

Humanity must reach beyond nationalism to **build fit-for-purpose global governance for managing the Earth's atmosphere - our common climate system.** Such governance, if adopted, can ensure that existing climate commitments are fulfilled and are implemented collectively and effectively.

Principles and values that are shared across the world's major religions, faiths and philosophies provide inspiration and guidance for building such governance. These include the principles of protection of creation (the Earth's global ecosystem), reciprocity/equity, justice/fairness, social responsibility and Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship.

These principles and values point towards a number of environmental governance proposals that also have a strong basis in science, are feasible and enjoy public support. We appeal to States Parties at COP 29 to take note of these principles and to take action on the proposed governance mechanisms.



Protection of creation: The Earth's global ecosystem is under extreme threat. In addition to the atmosphere (climate change), we have already breached five of the other eight [Planetary Boundaries](#). In order to bring us back from the brink of global ecosystem collapse, we need to develop and implement a cooperative global emergency action-plan now.

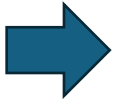
We encourage States Parties to the Climate Change Convention meeting at COP29 to support a [UN Declaration of Planetary Emergency](#), the establishment of a Planetary Emergency Platform, connected with the development and implementation of a cooperative Planetary Emergency Action Plan.



Reciprocity/equity: Reciprocity is the principle that you treat others the way that you would want them to treat you – a “Golden Rule” found across faith, ethical and religious traditions. Likewise, equity extends this principle to future generations to hold that we should pass onto future generations a world that is no worse – and hopefully is better – than the world passed onto us by our ancestors. Two effective ways to ensure reciprocity and intergenerational equity would be to affirm the rights of future generations and establish Institutional Representatives of Future Generations to ensure implementation of these rights.

We encourage States Parties to:

- a) *Implement the [Declaration on Future Generations](#) adopted at the Summit of the Future;*
- b) *Give full support to the [UN Special Envoy for Future Generations](#) being established by UN Secretary-General; and*
- c) *Establish similar institutional representatives for future generations at local, national and regional levels, noting the excellent [examples of such representative positions](#) already established.*



Justice/fairness (and accountability): The principle of justice/fairness holds that use of Earth’s resources needs to be managed in ways which are fair and just to all people and to the environment itself, and that we need mechanisms to ensure accountability for this. The principle provides the basis for fair management of resources including resolution of environmental conflicts and application of law that respects human rights and the rights of nature.

- a) *We encourage States Parties to recognize and fully implement the [human right to a healthy environment](#), as well as the [rights of nature](#).*
- b) *We call on States to utilize courts for the resolution of environment and resource conflicts and the implementation of environmental law, including national environment courts, regional courts and international courts and tribunals such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and to begin the development of an [International Court for the Environment \(ICE\)](#).*
- c) *We highlight the importance of the [climate case](#) currently before the ICJ, and call for full implementation of its upcoming decision.*
- d) *We welcome the initiative to [add ecocide as a crime](#) under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, and*
- e) *We support proposals to include environmental crimes such as “environmental degradation” and the “exploitation of natural resources” in the potential [crimes against humanity treaty](#) currently before the UN Sixth Committee.*



Social responsibility: The principle of social responsibility holds that we have a duty to ensure provision of everyone’s basic needs, and that the environment must be protected so that human needs are able to be met both now and into the future.

We encourage States to advance this principle with respect to the climate by negotiating, and implementing key principles of, a [Fossil Fuel Treaty](#) that would end subsidies for fossil fuels, phase out fossil fuel extraction, and increase investment in green economies, in particular in developing countries, to ensure that basic human needs are met in the transition to a fossil-fuel free future.



Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship: The principle of Guardianship/Earth Trusteeship holds that humanity does not own the Earth, even if some lands and territories are divided into private property. Rather we are guardians or trustees of the world for current and future generations. This role brings responsibility to better manage the various global environmental commons (e.g. the full Earth system, including the atmosphere, oceans, outer space and sea-bed) and common lands (‘national commons’) through effective Earth trusteeship models. This should be complemented by building effective environmental law which is universally applicable, including to private lands and territories, as well as to the commons.

- a) *We call on the United Nations to establish a cooperative trusteeship approach for better governance of the global commons, drawing inspiration for such governance from the [UN Secretary-General’s proposal to re-purpose the UN Trusteeship Council](#) and proposals to create an [Earth System Council](#) as a fourth pillar of the UN.*
- b) *In addition, we highlight [examples of Earth Trusteeship](#) currently implemented at local, national and regional levels, such as national parks/reserves and the establishment of legal rights for natural entities. We call for a strengthening and expansion of such trusteeships.*

* The Appeal is being coordinated by the [Transnational Working Group on Values, faith-based perspectives and global governance](#). It is open for endorsement by faith-based individuals and communities. [Click here](#) to endorse by November 9, 2024. Further information on the earth governance proposals made in this appeal is available at www.earthgovernance.org (see [proposals](#) and [campaigns](#)).