

Recommendation on the desirability of preparing a declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change

Meeting in Paris in Extraordinary Session from 28 to 30 June 2010,

Recalling its recommendation, adopted at its 6th Ordinary Session in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, “that UNESCO develop a framework of ethical principles in relation to climate change”,

Reaffirming the argument put forward in the latter recommendation, on the basis of its report on “The Ethical Implications of Global Climate Change”, that “In view of the nature and extent of the scientific, social and human challenges of global climate change, which necessitate adoption of policies at the global level to address the pressing needs of the most vulnerable in the face of major uncertainties and the exigencies of international cooperation, it is urgent to determine universal ethical principles to guide responses to such challenges.”,

Emphasizing the comprehensive and cross-cutting nature of the challenges of climate change, which call for integration of an ethical approach within an overall intersectoral framework for response,

Taking note of the resolution of the 35th General Conference that “the ethical principles in relation to climate change may be the subject of a declaration and that further study of this issue is necessary”,

Committed to informing the Director-General's consideration of the desirability of preparing a draft declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change, on which she will report to the Executive Board at its 185th session in October 2010,

Taking account of the views expressed by participants in the regional workshops on ethics and climate change held in Dakar (Senegal), New Delhi (India), Yerevan (Armenia), Yokohama (Japan) and Montevideo (Uruguay) between March and June 2010,

Further noting the views expressed in written submissions and in the course of regional consultation meetings organized in the context of the UNESCO consultation process on the desirability of preparing a declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change,

Reflecting the conclusions of the interim report on “An Ethical Framework for Climate Change Policies” adopted at the above-mentioned Extraordinary Session,

The World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) addresses the following recommendation to the Director-General with respect to the desirability of preparing a declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change.

1. Determination of universal ethical principles in relation to climate change would complement other efforts under way within the United Nations system, subject to explicit articulation of UNESCO action with discussion on implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
2. Relevant universal ethical principles would provide invaluable support to climate change responses at various levels, and in particular to design of appropriate equitable adaptation policies.
3. There is a significant body of internationally recognized principles that bear directly on climate change or could be adapted to apply to it. However, many of these principles require further elaboration on the basis of extensive consultation.
4. Therefore, preparation of a draft declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change would not be feasible for submission to the 36th General Conference.
5. With the objective of favouring genuine consensus, COMEST should conduct a systematic review, including consultation with Member States, of ethical principles identified as requiring further elaboration in relation to climate change. COMEST's report thereon to the Director-General should be available for the consideration of the Executive Board at its 189th session, on the basis of which it will be in a position to reassess the desirability of preparing a declaration of ethical principles in relation to climate change.