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PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT PRELIMINARY TEXT OF A NON-BINDING DECLARATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In accordance with the decisions of UNESCO's General Conference at its 38th session and of its Executive Board at its 199th session ([38 C/Resolution 42](#) and [199 EX/Decision 5.I.B](#)), the Director-General of UNESCO constituted an Ad Hoc Expert Group (AHEG) to prepare a first draft of a preliminary text of a non-binding declaration on ethical principles in relation to climate change.

The meeting of the AHEG was convened by the Director-General in Rabat from 20 to 24 September 2016, at the generous invitation of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco. Thereafter, Member States were consulted by a written procedure until 1 February 2017, and the AHEG revised its draft based on the advice of Member States.

This document contains the revised first draft of the AHEG, which may serve as a basis for a preliminary text of a non-binding declaration on ethical principles in relation to climate change. In accordance with the process outlined in [199 EX/Decision 5.I.B](#), it is submitted as a working document for the Intergovernmental Expert Meeting that will be held at UNESCO headquarters, Paris France, from 27 to 30 June 2017.

PROPOSAL FOR A DRAFT PRELIMINARY TEXT OF A NON-BINDING DECLARATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN RELATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Member States of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris at the thirty-ninth session of the General Conference, from 7 to 29 November 2017,

Considering the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other relevant expert organizations on the scientific conclusions regarding climate change as a global threat to the future of all life on Earth,

Noting with great concern that anthropogenic climate change is not only impacting the sustainability of Earth's human and natural systems in an unprecedented way, but is already causing harm with many irreversible adverse consequences, such that there is an urgent imperative to mitigate the causes, and to adapt to the consequences of climate change,

Recognizing that the share of past, current and future global emissions of greenhouse gases, as well as the impacts of climate change, are unequally distributed among the world's nations, and their many societal groups and communities, such that their individual responsibilities towards mitigation and adaptation differ,

Noting with concern that the impacts of climate change exacerbate other threats to human and natural systems, and place additional burdens on the poor and vulnerable, particularly on children, who lack the capacity to cope and adapt, as well as on women, who suffer disproportionate harm by virtue of being largely responsible for food production, raising families and other crucial activities central to human livelihoods and well-being,

Recognizing that in spite of these differences in responsibility and vulnerability, climate change is a common concern for all humankind, rising above national, sectoral and individual interests,

Convinced that the global and local challenges of climate change cannot be met without the participation of all people at all levels of society, including states, international organizations, sub-national entities, local authorities, rural communities, the private sector, civil society organizations, and individuals,

Conscious that actions to reduce climate change must rapidly be undertaken by all nations in accordance with the principles of equity as well as those of the common but differentiated responsibilities in the light of different national circumstances as reaffirmed by the Paris Agreement; *reiterating* that significant contributions should be pursued by all to limit climate change and its effects, with developed countries taking the lead; and *recalling* the commitment by developed countries to provide

support to developing countries through financial and technological means as well as educational and scientific capacity building,

Recognizing the need for a rapid transition to sustainable lifestyles and sustainable economic development, and *recognizing* that sustainable lifestyles and sustainable economic development play a centrally important role in responding to climate change,

Convinced of the need to respond urgently to climate change with effective and comprehensive cross-cutting policies which are based on firm and justified ethical principles,

Emphasizing the importance of including a gender perspective within climate change policies, and recognizing the differential needs and access to resources of both men and women, as well as the needs of the most vulnerable that include but are not limited to women, refugees, indigenous peoples, rural communities, persons with disabilities, displaced people, the elderly, youth, and children,

Recognizing that meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including the most vulnerable, is essential to effective decision-making to reduce climate change and its impacts,

Also emphasizing the fundamental importance of science, technological innovation, relevant knowledge, and education for sustainable development for responding to the challenge of climate change, including appropriate local, traditional and indigenous knowledge,

Recognizing that not only climate change itself, but also the responses to it, are likely to have many important and variable ethical implications at different scales of place and time, and that it has become an imperative to include ethical guidelines as a necessary element in climate change solutions,

Recalling the work of the United Nations and its Agencies on climate change, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN-Agenda 2030, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement adopted by 195 countries at COP-21 in December 2015, in which it was resolved to keep the average global surface temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase in average global surface temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels,

Considering that the UNFCCC is the primary multilateral forum in the global effort for responding to climate change, and *recalling* the commitments of the Paris Agreement,

Bearing in mind the 1997 UNESCO Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations Towards Future Generations, and

Taking into account the work carried out by the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) on environmental ethics in general and the ethical issues associated with climate change in particular,

Adopt this Declaration and proclaim the following principles.

General Provisions

Article 1: Aim and Scope

1. This Declaration proclaims and elaborates ethical principles of decision-making, policy formulation, and other actions related to climate change,
2. This Declaration calls upon states to integrate these ethical principles in all decisions and actions related to climate change that are taken internationally, regionally, nationally, sub-nationally and locally.
3. This Declaration also calls upon individuals, groups, local and territorial authorities, scientific and other communities, as well as indigenous communities, international organizations, including the UN system, institutions and corporations, public and private at all levels and in all sectors to integrate these ethical principles in the decisions and actions that they take in response to climate change.

Principles

The following principles should be considered, respected and promoted within the scope of this Declaration, and in decisions taken or actions carried out in responding to climate change:

Article 2: Prevention of Harm

Considering that climate change not only erodes the sustainability of Earth's ecosystems and the services they provide, as well as threatening the future well-being of people and their livelihoods, local communities, and individuals through harmful and negative consequences, some of which are already irreversible, states, sub-national and non-state actors should take all measures within their powers to:

- a. formulate and implement policies and actions that mitigate and enable adaptation to climate change;
- b. anticipate, avoid or minimize harm, wherever it might emerge, from climate change, as well as from climate mitigation and adaptation policies and actions;
- c. seek transnational co-operation before deploying new technologies that may have transnational impacts that are negative or otherwise.

Article 3: Precautionary Principle

Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent, mitigate or adapt to climate change.

Article 4: Equity, Justice and Fairness

1. Global and environmental justice in relation to climate change requires all people and organizations at all levels to work together in a spirit of justice, global partnership and global solidarity, in particular in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable people, and the environment. An intensive global engagement is needed, mobilizing governments, international organizations, including the UN system, private sector, civil society, and other relevant actors.
2. It is important for all to take measures to safeguard and protect Earth's terrestrial and marine ecosystems, for present and future generations. The interaction of people and ecosystems is particularly important given the high dependence of one upon the other. In this context, measures to safeguard Earth's ecosystems should take into account the contribution of women to decision-making when it come to mitigation and adaptation, since women are disproportionately affected by climate change while at the same time tending to have lower access to resources. These measures must also take into account the needs of the most vulnerable that include but are not limited to women, refugees, indigenous peoples, rural communities, persons with disabilities, displaced people, the elderly, youth, and children.
3. Each individual or group of individuals should be granted effective and timely access to information and knowledge on climate change and its impacts, and on the means of how to implement mitigation and adaptation actions, taking into account the differentiated needs and access to resources of the most vulnerable. States should facilitate and encourage public awareness, and participation in decision-making and actions by making information on climate change, and responses to it, widely available in a timely manner.
4. In response to the adverse effects of climate change, and to climate change mitigation and adaptation policies and actions, every individual or group of individuals should be granted effective access to justice according to national laws, including redress and remedy as stated in the 1992 Rio Declaration.

Article 5: Sustainable Development

To ensure that future generations are able to meet their needs, it is urgent that states, sub-national and non-state actors:

- a. promote sustainable development goals, especially by adopting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, using resources efficiently and supporting climate-friendly low-greenhouse gas emission technologies.

- b. ensure that all people benefit from the opportunities of development, especially groups that are vulnerable to climate change (see 4.2), and in this way, contribute to the eradication of poverty in all its forms, dimensions, and extremities.
- c. tackle the adverse effects of climate change in areas that deserve special attention due to their humanitarian implications and consequences: food, energy, and water insecurity, desertification, land degradation, climate-related migrations, natural disasters, as well as the vulnerability of women, children, and the elderly, especially in poor rural areas.

Article 6: Solidarity

1. States, sub-national and non-state actors, and those who have the capacity to address climate change should act and co-operate by taking into account:
 - a. the importance of protecting and enhancing the world we share in a way that reflects the solidarity and interdependence among peoples of different backgrounds, and the interdependence of humankind with other organisms, ecosystems, and the environment;
 - b. the well-being, livelihoods and survival of future generations which depend on our current use of resources and the resulting impacts thereof;
 - c. the interconnectedness of the physical, ecological, and human systems of all countries, regions and communities across Earth.
2. Those who have knowledge related to the causes and impacts of climate change and responses to it should share the associated knowledge in a timely manner and on equitable terms in order to increase the adaptive and mitigating capacities of all, and to increase the resilience of people and ecosystems.
3. Human beings collectively and individually have a moral duty to assist people and groups that are most vulnerable to climate change, especially when catastrophic events occur.
4. Developed states, and relevant sub-national and non-state actors should co-operate to address the challenges of climate change by providing the timely transfer of pure and applied knowledge and technologies, capacity-building, and financial resources to developing countries, particularly to Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

Article 7: Scientific Knowledge and Integrity in Decision-Making

1. Decision-making based on science is critically important for meeting the mitigation and adaptation challenges of a rapidly changing climate. Decisions must be based on, and guided by, the best available knowledge from the natural and social sciences, including interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary science, and by taking into account appropriate local, traditional and indigenous knowledge.

2. In order to optimally aid in decision-making, science needs to meet the highest standards of research integrity by being impartial, rigorous, honest, and transparent, and must give adequate estimates of uncertainty in order to provide decision-makers insight into, and understanding of, the underlying risks as well as opportunities.
3. Scientific co-operation and capacity-building must be strengthened in developing countries in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of climate change impacts as well as potential mitigation and adaptation actions. Researchers have a shared responsibility for ensuring that analyses and recommendations are based on the 'Precautionary Principle' and contribute to avoiding or minimizing harm.
4. States should:
 - a. take measures which help protect and maintain the independence of science and the integrity of the scientific process. This includes assisting in maintaining strong scientific standards as well as transparency at all levels with respect to scientific funding, methodologies and research conclusions;
 - b. raise awareness and promote literacy in science in all sectors and amongst their populations in order to underpin strong and collective action and understanding of how to respond to climate change;
 - c. promote accurate communication on climate change based on peer-reviewed scientific research, including the broadest promulgation of science in the media and other forms of communication;
 - d. build effective mechanisms to strengthen the interface between science and policy to ensure a strong knowledge-base in decision-making.

Implementation of the Principles

In order to disseminate, promote and strengthen the ethical principles proclaimed in this Declaration, states as well as sub-national and non-state actors are called upon to:

Article 8: Science, Technologies and Innovations

1. Develop strategies to uphold the integrity of scientific research in addressing climate change issues.
2. Use the best available scientific knowledge and evidence in decision-making that directly or indirectly relates to climate change issues.
3. Give preference to the development and scaling up of carefully assessed technologies, infrastructure and actions that reduce climate change and its associated risks.

4. Increase as far as possible the participation of scientists from developing countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in climate-related science.
5. Promote open file initiatives and Open Educational Resources (OER) so that information and training opportunities relevant to the challenge and solutions associated with climate change are shared across the entire scientific and other relevant communities internationally.

Article 9: Risk assessment and management

Promote the development of local risk maps, early warning systems, science-based environmental and technology assessments, and the appropriate management of risks related to climate change.

Article 10: Vulnerable groups

Give priority in responding to climate change to the needs of vulnerable groups (see 4.2).

Article 11: Education

1. Advance curricula in line with UNESCO's work and initiatives on Education for Sustainable Development and Education for Climate Change, and in line with Article 6 of the UNFCCC, that build awareness and knowledge about humankind's relation to Earth's climate system and ecosystems, as well as an understanding of the Principles proclaimed in this Declaration and how to implement and mainstream them.
2. Ensure that all people, irrespective of gender, age, or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous people, children, and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to respond to climate change and contribute to sustainable development.
3. Promote formal, non-formal, and informal education with regard to climate change challenges and solutions.
4. Encourage educational institutions and educators to integrate these principles in their teaching activities from the pre-school to university levels.
5. Promote, at all levels of education (formal, non-formal, and informal), that the recognition of cultural, social, and gender diversity is valuable and is an important source of knowledge with which to promote dialogue and the exchange of knowledge indispensable to responding to climate change.

Article 12: Public Awareness

Promote awareness regarding climate change and the best practices for responding to it, through strengthening social dialogue, and communication by the

media, scientific communities, and civil society organizations, including religious and cultural communities.

Article 13: Accountability

1. Ensure that policy goals, commitments and agreements on climate change and sustainable development are acted upon, and that the actions taken are regularly evaluated, particularly against the ethical principles described in this Declaration.
2. Ensure the integrity of climate policy and action through governance measures, by promoting transparency and preventing corruption, the misuse of power, and fraud.
3. Empower citizens to hold their governments accountable in so far as acting immediately and sincerely to achieve current and future international and national climate goals, commitments and agreements, including those made under the UNFCCC and its Paris agreement.
4. Strengthen the mechanisms that underpin the social, environmental and societal responsibility of corporations and businesses.

Article 14: International Co-operation

1. Facilitate, support and engage in international processes and programmes to communicate these principles, and to promote multidisciplinary, pluralistic, and intercultural dialogue around them.
2. Facilitate, support, and engage in international research collaborations and capacity-building initiatives related to climate change.
3. Promote sharing of the results of science, technological innovations, and best practices in response to climate change in a timely and equitable manner.
4. Act with urgency upon the commitments taken in terms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Paris Agreement, and Agenda 2030, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
5. Respect and promote solidarity between and among states, as well as individuals, families, groups and communities, with special regard to those rendered vulnerable by the impacts of climate change and those who have the most limited resources.
6. Combine responses to climate change with already existing mechanisms of international co-operation, including co-operation on development, with special regard for climate change responses that can also contribute to addressing other policy goals that advance the well-being of all peoples.

Article 15: Follow up by UNESCO

UNESCO is the primary UN Agency to promote and disseminate this Declaration in collaboration with other UN Agencies, including but not limited to the World Commission on Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST), the

International Bioethics Committee (IBC), the Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee (IGBC), the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), the Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB), the International Geosciences Programme (IGCP), the International Basic Sciences Programme (IBSP), the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), the Management of Social Transformation Programme (MOST), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and other relevant international bodies working on the issues of climate change, including the International Council for Science, the International Social Science Council, as well as the Future Earth: Research for Global Sustainability programme for which UNESCO is a co-sponsor.

Final provisions

Article 16: Interrelation and complementarity of the principles

The Declaration needs to be understood as a whole, and principles are to be understood as complementary and interrelated. Each principle is to be considered in the context of the other principles, as appropriate and relevant in the circumstances.

Article 17: Denial of acts contrary to human rights, fundamental freedoms, human dignity, and concern for life on Earth

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as approval for any state, other social actor, group, or person to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to human rights, fundamental freedoms, human dignity, and concern for life on Earth.