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## Seventy-fourth session

Item 19 (i) of the provisional agenda\*

### Sustainable development

## Harmony with Nature

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### *Summary*

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution [73/235](#), by which the Assembly requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its seventy-third session, an interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature to commemorate International Mother Earth Day, on 22 April 2019, and requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly, at its seventy-fourth session, a report on the implementation of the resolution.

The 2019 interactive dialogue marked 10 years since the resolution declaring international Mother Earth Day ([63/278](#)) was adopted, further supported by the first resolution on Harmony with Nature adopted by the Assembly, on 21 December 2009. The present commemorative report highlights humankind's evolving consciousness of our relationship with Mother Earth, an evolution manifested worldwide through legislation, policy, education and public engagement, all guided by the urgency to protect Mother Earth and to transition to an Earth-centred paradigm in furthering implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

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\* [A/74/150](#).



## I. Introduction

1. On 20 December 2018, the General Assembly adopted its resolution [73/235](#), its tenth resolution on Harmony with Nature ([73/235](#)), by which it requested the President of the Assembly to convene, at its seventy-third session, an interactive dialogue in commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2019, with the participation of Member States, United Nations organizations, independent experts and other stakeholders.

2. The President of the General Assembly convened an interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature under the theme “Mother Earth approach in the implementation of education and climate action” consisting of two panels, on Education in harmony with Nature, and Climate action in harmony with Nature. The dialogue was further framed by the report of the Secretary-General on Harmony with Nature ([A/73/221](#)).

3. Panellists<sup>1</sup> in the dialogue celebrated advances made over the last decade towards a non-anthropocentric or Earth-centred paradigm, with emphasis on legislation, policy, education and public engagement worldwide. Their full presentations and interventions are available on a dedicated page on the Harmony with Nature website.<sup>2</sup>

4. The present report draws on the panellists’ presentations, together with contributions from members worldwide of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network.<sup>3</sup> It covers achievements and progress during the period July 2018–July 2019, indicating how rising awareness and profound concern over climate change is reflected in Earth-centred initiatives in legislation, policy and education.

## II. Commemorating ten years of International Mother Earth Day and Harmony with Nature

5. The year 2019 commemorates General Assembly resolutions adopted 10 years ago,<sup>4</sup> declaring 22 April International Mother Earth Day ([63/278](#)) and articulating the need for Harmony with Nature ([64/196](#)). These resolutions acknowledge that the current model of destructive development is equally damaging for Nature and human dignity alike. They have contributed to the global trend of granting legal rights or personhood to Nature.

6. As the President of the General Assembly emphasized in her introductory remarks at the interactive dialogue on 22 April 2019: “to look after Nature is to look after people, to respect their own life cycles”, and “it is imperative to abandon unbridled, unsustainable and unlimited exploitation of Nature, and to establish a development model capable of respecting the natural cycle of ecosystems and their capacity to replenish and regenerate”.

7. All participants at the interactive dialogue affirmed the need for reverence for our living planet and for transformation in legislation, economics and education.

<sup>1</sup> Silvia Bagni, Delphine Batho, Antonio Herman Benjamin, Frank Bibeau, David R. Boyd, Valérie Cabanes, Freddy Delgado, Thomas Egli, Gabriela Eslava, Cillian Lohan, Elizabeth MacPherson, Markie Miller, Liam Sy Paquemar, Luis Armando Tolosa Villabona, Ngozi Unuigbo and Ivan Zambrana-Flores. Moderator: Alessandro Pelizzon.

<sup>2</sup> [www.harmonywithnatureun.org/dialogues](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/dialogues).

<sup>3</sup> [www.harmonywithnatureun.org/experts](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/experts).

<sup>4</sup> In the context of the Earth-centred paradigm addressed in the report, Nature or Mother Earth is not an object or property but a subject of law, with legal personhood, whose intrinsic value is recognized, hence written throughout the report with a capital N. This capitalization has been recognized and incorporated in General Assembly resolution [73/235](#), twenty-ninth preambular para.

8. The Deputy Minister for Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change and Forest Management and Development of Bolivia explained that Bolivia had extended collective rights to Nature, conceiving of human beings not only as separate individuals but also as social collectives; that is, as individuals woven within complex webs of cultural and economic systems. The rights of Mother Earth are extensions of the rights to life, to reproduction, to water and more.

9. The Permanent Representative of India emphasized that many ancient cultures have lived in harmony with Nature, with a tradition of reverence for their ecosystems, drawing their sustenance while also protecting their surrounding natural bounty. Indeed, the ethos of India has always been living in harmony with Nature.

10. The Permanent Representative of Bangladesh stressed the need to protect and preserve the planet that nourishes and nurtures us and the ethos of local people: “living in harmony with Nature is required for our very collective survival. The people of Bangladesh have an umbilical connection to Mother Earth. From time immemorial, they have thrived on the bounties of Nature. While flood and other natural phenomena occurred, they could not disturb their intrinsic bond with Mother Earth”.

11. The Permanent Representative of Ecuador highlighted that the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador recognizes Nature as a living entity and a subject of rights, meaning that its existence, maintenance and reproduction must be respected and actively protected. In particular, its life cycles must be maintained, with the concomitant restoration and reparation of any damages against such cycles.

12. “Nature is no longer just a thing”, stated Justice Antonio Herman Benjamin of the High Court of Brazil. “Granting rights to Nature reflects a profound change from the traditional legal wisdom which once considered Nature just a collection of elements and now sees Nature as the meaning and foundation of all life. This shift in paradigm, once the topic of philosophical and ethical circles, now reveals itself as a legal paradigm”.

13. The Director of the Mother Earth Plurinational Authority of Bolivia further added that, in a plural world with various ontologies, it was imperative to transform the utilitarian view of the natural systems. “If we recognize humans as an integral part of Nature, then we need to go beyond talking about Nature in isolation. For Bolivia, the term Mother Earth embodies the concept of a complex living system that includes the natural world but also different human cultures and their histories”.

14. Cillian Lohan, a member of the European Economic and Social Committee and its Rapporteur on Climate Justice stated that the Committee was working on a policy initiative to transform the functioning of the economy based on a Mother Earth approach – applying tools to transform society based on new economic models which meet human needs while protecting the planet that we all depend upon.

15. Delphine Batho, Member of Parliament of the National Assembly of France and President of Generation Écologie, emphasized the need to change our collective relationship with nature, which would entail two fundamental steps: recognition of the rights of Nature whereby humankind is an integral part of Nature, and Nature’s components – rivers, forests, trees, oceans and mountains – as subjects of legal rights.

16. “Education is a vital tool in the relationship between humans and Nature and with implications for global climate change” and “this type of education can be acquired formally and informally, and at all ages”, stated Professor Ngozi Unuigbo.

17. Professor David R. Boyd, the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, recommended three steps for accelerate progress towards a sustainable

future: teaching ecological literacy, promoting the right to live in a healthy and sustainable environment, and recognizing the rights of Nature.

18. In his closing statements, Professor Alessandro Pelizzon, the dialogue moderator, emphasized that wider collective discussion on Harmony with Nature was contributing to the depth, diversity and scope of the Earth-centred paradigm. He stressed that law and education were central to the development of the paradigm, bringing a profound ontological and semantic shift towards a redefined legal conceptualization of the non-human world.

19. The following section captures current achievements and initiatives during the period July 2018–July 2019 inspired by the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme. Advances in legislation, policy development, formal and informal education and public engagement reflect a growing commitment among many in the global community, during the last 10 years, for an Earth-centred paradigm shift towards living in harmony with Nature.

### **III. Earth-centred laws and policies<sup>5</sup>**

20. Federal, state and local governments around the world are increasingly adopting laws that recognize the rights of Nature and the natural world to exist and flourish. In many cases, these new laws are the product of collaboration between non-governmental organizations, civil society associations, legislators and legislative bodies, working together to draft, adopt and implement laws recognizing Nature as a subject of rights and/or a legal “person”, protected by law.

21. Likewise, non-governmental organizations and civil society associations have successfully expanded their efforts to obtain judicial recognition of Nature’s rights and of rulings that protect the natural world. Additionally, countries with Nature’s rights already incorporated into their laws are implementing those rights through judicial decisions protecting Nature.

22. Customary and indigenous laws continue to serve as models for the expansion of Western positive law toward respecting Nature and Nature’s rights. An increasing number of indigenous groups have taken formal action to incorporate into their governing laws what they have long understood as the basic truth of life: humans are part of the natural world and must live in harmony with Nature.

#### **A. National legislation adopted to grant rights of Nature**

23. On 30 January 2019, the High Court of Bangladesh delivered its verdict on the 2016 petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh against illegal encroachment on the Turag River. The Court’s ruling, based on the doctrine of public trust, granted legal person status to the river and called for the immediate removal of all illegal establishments on its banks.

24. On 21 March 2019, the Federal Supreme Court in Brazil adopted an ecological perspective based on the principle of dignity of the human person and issued a historic ruling recognizing non-human animals as the subjects of rights. The ruling addressed the need to change the legal anthropocentric paradigm and replace it with biocentric thinking which recognizes Nature’s intrinsic value and advances the interconnectedness between human beings and Nature.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/rightsOfNature>.

25. On 20 December 2018, the rights of Nature were recognized in the Organic Law of the city of Paudalho, Pernambuco, Brazil. The law was the basis for the recognition of the San Severino Ramos Natural Water Spring rights. Under local Law No. 878/2018, natural water has a right to exist, thrive and evolve.
26. On 17 June 2019, the Superior Court of Medellín, Colombia, recognized the Cauca River, its basin and affluents as the subject of rights. The decision declares that the river has rights to protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration, like those granted to the Atrato River in 2016, and that a commission of guardians must be established.
27. On 30 May 2019, the Administrative Tribunal of Tolima, Colombia, recognized the rights of three rivers under its jurisdiction, the Coello, Combeima and Cocora Rivers, including their basins and tributaries. The Tribunal's decision provides that those rivers are individual entities with rights to protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration by the State and local communities and ordered an immediate halt to mining exploration and exploitation in the river basins.
28. On 19 March 2019, the rights of La Plata River in Huila, Colombia, were recognized by the Municipal Civil Court in La Plata. The decision arose from a lawsuit filed by local inhabitants of El Remolino district against a public services company whose neglect of a septic tank has contaminated the river. The sentence upholds the right of El Remolino inhabitants to a healthy environment and the rights of the river and ecosystem.
29. On 9 August 2018, the Court in Boyacá, Colombia, recognized the Pisba Paramo as the subject of rights. It was the result of a lawsuit filed by local inhabitants from six municipalities against the delimitation of the *paramo*'s borders for mining permits, without prior consultation, and the inadequate protection of the *paramos* and their importance in the water cycle. The tribunal ordered the Ministry for the Environment to protect the 45,000 hectares of *paramo*.
30. In January 2019, in Ecuador, a Venezuelan company seeking to install a dolphinarium in a tourist destination requested review of their petition, which had previously been denied by the Ministry of the Environment owing to animal welfare concerns. The Ministry drew on the country's rights of Nature legislation and denied authorization for the dolphinarium. Where previously in Ecuador rights of Nature have been applied mainly to mining issues, ecosystems protection and indigenous collective rights, the application thereof to the marine sphere is a developing trend.
31. On 10 June 2019, the Congress of the state of Colima, Mexico, approved an amendment to the political constitution of Colima providing that no economic or political interest should take precedence over the interest and rights of Nature. Articles 2 and 16 of the local constitution were amended to recognize that Nature, comprised of all its ecosystems and species, should be respected as a collective entity that is the subject of rights and that its protection, preservation and recovery is a shared responsibility of the public, private and social sectors. Congresswoman Blanca Livier Rodríguez led the effort, with legal support from the Earth Law Center.
32. The Local Commission of Human Rights in the state of Guerrero, Mexico, whose constitution (2014) was the first federal entity to recognize the rights of Nature, has agreed to receive complaints submitted by citizens for violations with regard to animal abuse, as in the case of the Zochilpan zoo.
33. In Uganda, on 7 March 2019, the Parliament recognized the rights of Nature in its National Environment Act, 2019. Article 4 provides that "nature has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution", and that "a person has a right to bring an action before a competent court for any infringement of rights of Nature under this Act". Advocates

for Natural Resources and Development led the effort, supported by the Gaia Foundation.

34. In the United States of America, the Yurok Tribal Council, in California, on 9 May 2019, voted unanimously in favour of a resolution establishing the rights of the Klamath River. With the resolution, the Yurok Tribe becomes the fourth Native American Tribe to adopt the rights of Nature into its legislation.

35. On 26 February 2019, voters in Toledo, Ohio, voted for the Lake Erie Bill of Rights, which guarantees the right of the lake and its surrounding watershed “to exist, flourish, and naturally evolve”.

36. In late 2018, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, in Minnesota, passed a law formally recognizing the Rights of Manoomin (“wild rice”) stating that “it has become necessary to provide a legal basis to protect wild rice and freshwater resources as part of our primary treaty foods for future generations”. The law reaffirms the Anishinaabe relationship with and responsibility for wild rice, sacred landscape and traditional laws and declares it illegal for any business or government to violate the Rights of Manoomin.

37. In June 2019, Santa Monica City Council, California, highlighted the importance of recognizing Nature’s Rights by placing the city’s Sustainability Rights Ordinance, which declares the fundamental and inalienable rights of natural communities and ecosystems, at the beginning of a new municipal code division that will encompass all of the city’s many environmental laws. The City Council also reiterated its legislative recognition of Nature’s Rights, when it prohibited private water wells in August 2018.

38. On 9 July 2018, the Board of Trustees for the Town of Crestone, Colorado, unanimously adopted a resolution recognizing the rights of Nature.

## **B. Ongoing national legislation granting rights of Nature**

39. On 22 April 2019, in Chile, a citizens’ petition for the inclusion of the Rights of Mother Earth in the Constitution was presented to the Senate. The Senate will discuss amendments to the Constitution in the coming months.

40. In May 2019, the Supreme Court of Ecuador rendered a verdict on a wildlife crime case, ordering confiscation of a vessel caught transporting 6,226 sharks. The Ecuadorian coordinating body of organizations defending nature and the environment, a non-governmental organization, submitted written arguments on the rights of Nature, which were referred to in the verdict.

41. In the Ecuadorian rights of Nature cases, the role of *amicus curiae*, whereby non-parties to a case are allowed to participate as “friends of the Court” by briefing on important issues such as how the decision may impact public and environmental welfare, has been decisive. Since 2010, the environmental lawyer Hugo Echeverría, of the coordinating body of organizations defending nature and the environment, has authored *amicus curiae* briefs to provide specialized legal arguments in several environmental cases prosecuted in Galapagos, a renowned world natural heritage site.

42. On 5 February 2019, the Constitutional Court of Ecuador announced that it would address the juridical content of the rights of Nature. The Court’s decision on selected cases becomes binding jurisprudence, providing substantive content to constitutional rights. This is the first time that the Court has ever used this power in regard to the rights of Nature and has announced that it will address standards and limits regarding the exploitation of resources and the impacts thereof on Nature.

43. The Ecuadorian Legal Observatory on the Rights of Nature,<sup>6</sup> launched on 20 May 2019, contains a compilation of all national rights of Nature cases, providing a global tool, complete with legal analysis based exclusively on the constitutional terms of the applicability of the rights of Nature. Ecuador remains a leader in the field and, on 20 October 2018, commemorated the 10-year anniversary of the adoption of the rights of Nature in the Constitution of Ecuador.

44. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the town council of Frome has drafted a bye-law for the Rights of the River Frome, to protect the river, its tributaries and Rodden Meadow for the benefit of present and future generations. In 2019, having secured final council approvals, Frome is awaiting a central government response.

45. In the United States, Rekumani Bill Greendeer of the Ho-Chunk Nation, Wisconsin, brought to the Ho-Chunk General Council in September 2018 a proposed resolution on Nature's rights with the assistance of the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund. The Nation's legislature decided to establish a rights of Nature constitutional amendment, as well as supporting laws, to address concerns and protections expressed in the proposed resolution.

### C. Policy trends relating to the rights of Nature

46. In August 2018, the Australian Senator, Mehreen Fahuqi, in her first speech to the Australian Senate, called for the adoption of rights of Nature laws, in particular for iconic ecosystems such as the Great Barrier Reef, the Murray-Darling Basin and the Great Artesian Basin.

47. In the municipality of Lennik, Belgium, citizens intervened on behalf of Nature further to unsound restructuring of farmland. Lawyers filed an application to intervene on behalf of 100 protected trees in the Belgian climate case and, according to the application, that the protection of the trees is a duty incumbent on the regional authorities. Final ruling on the intervention is yet to be made.

48. In São Paulo, Brazil, a legal proposal for the rights of Nature was presented to the Committee on Constitution, Justice and Citizenship. The Law received a positive evaluation from the main commission and is expected to gain further support for future implementation within the legal system.

49. In Brumadinho, Brazil, where the collapse of a mine tailing dam in January 2019 caused tragedy for humans and ecosystems, Métodos de Apoio a Práticas Ambientais e Sociais is working, alongside the Aliança do Rio Doce movement and other civil society groups, on environmental and social recovery action plans, including the promotion of Nature's Rights and the rights of the Paraopeba River.

50. In cooperation with the Catholic University of Pernambuco and the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco, in Brazil, Métodos de Apoio a Práticas Ambientais e Sociais is working on legal recognition for the rights of the Capibaribe River, together with Deputy Daniel Coelho and several other organizations.

51. In 2019, the non-governmental organization Pender Ocean Defenders, in Pender Island, British Columbia, Canada, in partnership with the Earth Law Center, proposed a declaration on the Rights of the Southern Resident killer whales, calling upon the Pender Island Trustees to enact a resolution supporting the inherent rights of the whales.

<sup>6</sup> See [www.derechosdelanaturaleza.org.ec](http://www.derechosdelanaturaleza.org.ec).

52. In El Salvador, the non-governmental organization Sí por los Derechos de la Naturaleza (Yes for the Rights of Nature), is working on a proposed municipal ordinance that recognizes the Laguna El Espino as a living entity that is the subject of rights for the Municipal Council of Ahuachapán.
53. On 5 June 2019, the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador approved a pronouncement that “forests are living entities”. Sí por los Derechos de la Naturaleza and the Earth Law Center have also presented a proposed declaration of the rights of forests of El Salvador to the Legislative Assembly.
54. In Europe, five political parties actively support the rights of Nature and the recognition of ecocide as a crime and will take these concepts to the European Parliament. A new treaty presented by the European Green Party sets out the rights of Nature along with actions to protect the environment and combat climate change, establishing that everyone has the right to a stable climate and a healthy, balanced environment.
55. A group of French lawyers supporting the French International Union for the Conservation of Nature committee have drafted a rights of Nature motion to be considered by its 2020 World Conservation Congress.
56. In Italy, the non-governmental organization Nature’s Rights collaborated with the municipality of Civita Castellana to declare itself the first “Nature’s Rights Zone” in order to integrate Nature’s Rights principles into its policy and decision-making structures and create an action plan for implementation.
57. On 10 December 2018, in the Netherlands, the Earth Trusteeship Initiative launched the Hague Principles for a Universal Declaration on Responsibilities for Human Rights and Earth Trusteeship, which includes the rights of Nature.
58. On 11 December 2018, Members of the Netherlands Parliament received a petition from civil society advocating the right to wilderness, the rights of future generations, the right to non-violent interaction with animals and the right to a clean Earth, the latter including the rights of Nature.
59. In December 2018, local iwi (tribes) in Hawkes Bay, New Zealand, lodged a report with a local government authority seeking the recognition of Te Mata Peak as a legal person, proposing a similar model to that for the Whanganui River, which was granted legal personhood in 2016.
60. In Nigeria, the River Ethiope Trust Foundation, the Earth Law Center and other partners drafted the River Ethiope Rights Act of 2019 in a bid for the River Ethiope to be the first river in Africa recognized as a living entity with legal rights. Comments on the Nigerian National Water Resources Act of 2016 calling for rights of rivers integration into the law were presented to the Nigerian Parliament and are currently under review.
61. In Sweden, the Mayor of Forshaga Kommun, in collaboration with the non-governmental organization Rights of Mother Earth, has expressed interest in granting rights to an area of the Klarälven River within its county and council jurisdiction.
62. On 15 May 2019, at a seminar in the Swedish Parliament on the legal rights of Nature, Rights of Nature Sweden made a proposal for an amendment to the Constitution to the effect that “Nature, including ecosystems, natural communities, and species, shall be guaranteed the following rights to naturally exist, thrive, regenerate, evolve and be restored; and freedom to exercise, enforce, and defend these rights and freedoms”.

63. In Buliisa District, Uganda, the Bagungu community are documenting their customary laws and community ecological governance systems which embody the rights of Nature. Accompanied by the local non-governmental organizations the African Institute for Culture and Ecology and Advocates for Natural Resources and Development, they seek government recognition and protection for their sacred natural sites, including Lake Albert.

64. In St. Louis, Missouri, United States, a grassroots campaign is under way to adopt a public policy resolution that recognizes the rights of Cold Water Creek and all other interconnected waterways within the region to exist, regenerate and thrive. The resolution also seeks to recognize that the health and well-being of St. Louis communities is inseparable from the welfare of its natural environment.

65. From 16 to 19 June 2019, the conference Kairos for Creation: Confessing Hope for the Earth – The Wuppertal Call, was held in Wuppertal, Germany, hosted by the Protestant Association of Churches and Mission, the Evangelical Church in Germany, the United Evangelical Mission, Bread for the World and the World Council of Churches (ahead of the forthcoming eleventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches). Adopted recommendations and goals included the promotion of “United Nations processes to create a legal framework for a binding Universal Charter of the Rights of Mother Earth (Cochabamba 2010), an Earth International Jurisprudence System, to explore the possibilities of a United Nations council for the rights of Nature, as well as the recognition of ecocide as a criminal offence in the International Court of Justice”.

## IV. Earth-centred education

66. During the period July 2018–July 2019, both formal and informal education continue to promote Earth-centred education, invite wider discussion of the rights of Nature and strengthen collaboration and cooperation across the United Nations Harmony with Nature platform. Many universities and academic institutions have introduced or strengthened their curricula in relation to Earth jurisprudence, the Mother Earth approach and the rights of Nature, from high-schools through to post-graduate and doctoral programmes.

67. Education, climate action and civil society are profoundly intertwined in the collective response. Activities for public engagement continue to grow in diversity, with a shared goal of increasing awareness and understanding of the issue. A wealth of written and audiovisual materials keeps students and scholars abreast of steady developments in the legal paradigm.

### A. Formal education

68. In Santa Fe, Argentina, the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences of the National University of the Littoral continues to expand its programmes and online courses on the rights of Nature, some in their third and fourth edition. The Winter School of the University held a seminar on “Climate change and rights of the Amazon and future generations”.

69. The Australian Earth Law Alliance introduced first dedicated university-level Earth jurisprudence course in Australia at Griffith Law School, in 2016. Since then, the course has been offered each year and will be offered again in November 2019. Following the trend to develop studies on the subject, two full time PhD scholarships have been created at the University of New South Wales for students to research the rights of Nature, from 2019 to 2021.

70. The School of Law and Justice at Southern Cross University, Australia, is partnering with the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme, to offer a course titled “Ecological Jurisprudence”.

71. In Bangladesh, textbooks used at all educational levels make children aware of how human actions contribute to climate change and how to tackle it. Since 2009, the Government has successfully implemented a national service programme aimed at creating climate conscious citizens and skilled entrepreneurs who will undertake environmentally friendly enterprises, using clean and renewable energy, within a framework of transitioning to more harmony with Nature.

72. The Doctoral Programme in Law at the University of Marilia, São Paulo, Brazil, has included the rights of Nature within the discipline “Theories of Development” to ignite debates and scientific articles in collaboration with professors and students of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul.

73. Faculdades de Campinas college, in Brazil, initiated a course on topics related to the United Nations agenda in the formal undergraduate curriculum on International Relations. In the first semester of 2019, students attended classes and discussions on Harmony with Nature and explored the concept of ecological economics and practices. The students produced an e-book on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting a culture of peace and recent trends relating to Harmony with Nature.

74. In 2018, Colégio Dante Alighieri in São Paulo, Brazil, developed an Earth-centred interdisciplinary project (in biology, chemistry, English, geography, history, mathematics, physics, Portuguese and technology). Inspired by the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme, some 300 students, coordinators and teachers worked on the project, using texts, broadcast materials and discussions. The project served to contextualize the issue, and positive results were apparent in the final products, which developed students’ solutions for urban problems in Brazil.

75. In Bolivia, the intercultural decolonization education programme combines the local knowledge and wisdom of indigenous nations with Western-modern scientific knowledge, recognizing the contributions and strengths of each. This international programme has been developed in seven Latin American countries as well as in Ghana, India, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, through the South-South cooperation programme, Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development (COMPAS).

76. Bolivia has also made continuous intercultural decolonization available in all public universities. The Universidad Mayor de San Simón and the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés have led the effort, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation. Some 284 students were trained at the technical level and 247 through undergraduate and graduate levels. They participated in communicating results to local governments to improve decision-making regarding climate change.

77. In 1991, the Supreme Court of India provided directives on environmental education and, in 2003, issued nationwide directives to educational institutions. This has resulted in over 300 million students in 1.3 million schools and over 600 universities receiving compulsory education on the environment and climate change. The “Science Express Climate Action Special”, an innovative mobile science exhibition, mounted on a 16-coach train, has been visited by more than 15 million school children over a period of 16 years.

78. In the Netherlands, The Future Generations Lab, in collaboration with Nyenrode Business University, launched a research project on the legal personhood of the Wadden Sea in October 2018 until end 2019.

79. In April and May 2019, in the Republic of Korea, People for Earth continued its quarterly Earth jurisprudence lecture series, under the theme “A–Z: everything about Earth jurisprudence” in partnership with the Pro Bono Center of One Law Partners. The lecture series serves as a training programme for judicial officers, lawyers and law-students, accredited by the Korean Bar Association, playing an important role in transforming governance systems. Lecture topics include constitutional and economic law from an Earth jurisprudence perspective, and the significance and direction of Earth jurisprudence.

80. In New Zealand, the University of Canterbury further expanded course content on Earth jurisprudence and the rights of Nature, in particular as to natural resources law, in July 2019, and comparative law, in March 2019.

81. In Nigeria, the Faculty of Law, University of Benin, is integrating rights of Nature topics into the undergraduate and postgraduate courses on international environmental law throughout 2019.

82. In Spain, the University of Valencia expanded its Master’s degree in Constitutional Law in September 2018 to include study of the adoption of the rights of Nature and new Latin American constitutionalism. In July 2019, the University of Castilla-La Mancha, in its specialist course on constitutional justice, interpretation and application of the Constitution, is offering a module entitled “Environmental rights and Nature’s Rights”, within the framework of the European Erasmus + project (OPT-IN) on topics related to peace, Nature and interculturality.

## **B. Informal education and public engagement**

83. The Australian Earth Law Alliance established the Australian Peoples’ Tribunal for Community and Nature’s Rights, in which a panel of experts heard cases presented by citizens and Earth lawyers on matters concerning ecosystem destruction in Australia.

84. In Belgium, interest is rising, with several opinion pieces published in national newspapers advocating a shift towards the recognition of explicit rights for Nature, and the theme is being picked up in legal literature by authors such as Hendrik Schoukens.

85. The Federal Justice Council of Brazil and the Federal Universities of Ceará, Santa Catarina and Goiás, have come together under a technical cooperation agreement to provide support to the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme. The aim of the agreement is to establish international partnerships in research, teaching and publishing, to strengthen global initiatives regarding Harmony with Nature.

86. On International Mother Earth Day, 22 April 2019, a parallel dialogue on Harmony with Nature was held at the Federal Supreme Court in Brasília, chaired by Minister Edson Fachin. The dialogue was organized by the Federal Justice Council of Brazil for justices and judges of the Brazilian judicial system on the role that constitutional courts should play in the transition to Harmony with Nature.<sup>7</sup>

87. In 2019, the University of Farias Brito, Fortaleza, Brazil, proposes to include rights of Nature in the discipline of environmental constitutional law and to support the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme with audiovisual material.

88. The City Councillor of São Paulo, Brazil, Caio Miranda, in collaboration with Métodos de Apoio a Práticas Ambientais e Sociais, aims to institute a programme on

<sup>7</sup> [www.harmonywithnatureun.org/dialogues](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/dialogues).

ecological education for public schools called “Ambassadors of Nature”, with a focus on Earth jurisprudence. In December 2019, the results of the project will be presented by young participants at a meeting held annually at the United Nations in Geneva by the non-governmental organization Objectif Sciences International.

89. From 5 to 9 September 2019, Faculdades de Campinas will host the sixth session of its Model United Nations, with support from the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme and the World Federation of United Nations Associations and its International Model United Nations. High school and university students will debate the topic of Harmony with Nature. The Faculdades de Campinas Model United Nations raises awareness among Latin American students, so that, by 2030, they can assume leadership roles in promoting lifestyles in harmony with Nature in their communities.

90. During the first semester of 2019, Faculdades de Campinas conducted a study group on Harmony with Nature to create an understanding of what it means to live in harmony with Nature and to advance implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants produced a summary based on the discussion, participated in outreach activities for high school students and interacted online with experts from the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network. Faculdades de Campinas will run a second study group in the fall of 2019.

91. In Montreal, Canada, McGill University’s “Economics for the Anthropocene” partnership and “Leadership for the Ecozoic project” co-sponsored a 2019 monthly webinar series on ecological law and governance, in collaboration with the Ecological Law and Governance Association and other organizations. In May 2019, the Canadian Society of Ecological Economics held its biennial conference in Waterloo, Ontario, on the theme “Engaging economies of change”. The conference included a special session entitled “Ecological law: key themes and developments”.

92. On 25 June 2019, the Deputy Minister for Environment of Costa Rica began consultations with the Gaia Foundation to bring the Mother Earth Peace Path and Wellness Tourism Project into the National Conservation System, consisting of 32 national parks and dozens of refuges and reserves. The aim of the project is to provide education on climate change and Nature’s rights to visitors and promote the signing of the Mother Earth Peace and Wellness Agreement.

93. On 21 June 2019, the International Day of Yoga, the University of Costa Rica inaugurated an educational programme on Harmony with Nature to promote Earth jurisprudence, the principles for the conscious evolution of Mother Earth, and taking personal responsibility to combat climate change, which also contributes to the Mother Earth Peace and Wellness Agreement.

94. From 31 August to 2 September 2018, the first international wellness and spa tourism congress was held in La Fortuna, Costa Rica. Participants signed the Mother Earth wellness tourism manifesto, asking authorities to develop a model of wellness tourism that promotes Earth jurisprudence on the basis of the concept of holistic balance. Costa Rica also hosted the sixth international meeting of the Brazilian National Council on Research and Graduate Courses on Law, in association with the National University of Costa Rica, with a focus on human rights, constitutionalism and democracy, sustainability and Nature’s rights.

95. In Chile, several rights of Nature-centred events have been hosted. On 17 April 2019, a conference on the rights of Nature, in Valparaíso, was organized by the Centre for Research and Latin American Aesthetics of the University of Chile, the municipality of Valparaiso and the Chilean Rights of Mother Earth movement. In Alto Hospicio, Tarapacá, an ecopark, a replicable model of an urban garden designed with recycled materials was inaugurated on 25 April 2019 in an effort to emphasize the

urgency of implementing the rights of Nature in the region, organized by the municipality of Alto Hospicio, the non-governmental organization Manito Verde and the collective Women of the Desert. In La Huayca, the Council of Visions was held, focused on the creation of Nature's Rights movements in northern Chile.

96. In Ahuachán, El Salvador, Sí por los Derechos de la Naturaleza hosted a dialogue on 8 June 2019 entitled "A Conversation on Forestry Rights and Earth Jurisprudence" as part of World Environment Day. Over two hundred students from the region were invited to participate, to encourage future participation and education about the rights of Nature.

97. In March 2019, a proposal for educational cooperation was presented in the Vatican to Pope Francis by the organization Instituto Casa Comum, from various Latin American countries and cultures. Under the pact, Pachamama, or Mother Earth, is recognized as a living being to be cared for and respected in her dignity as the subject of rights, and one of the main focuses for cooperation.

98. In June 2019, the Ecological Law and Governance Association and the International Union for Conservation of Nature World Commission on Environmental Law Ethics Specialist Group gave presentations on key principles of Harmony with Nature at the twenty-seventh gathering of the Global Ecological Integrity Group at the University of Trieste. The Group is an interdisciplinary group that advances ecological integrity, Earth democracy and Earth jurisprudence as essential governance components for living in harmony with Nature.

99. In 2019, the Earth Law Center, with a coalition of leading environmental law academics and practitioners, secured a contract with Wolters Kluwer to publish a law school textbook, entitled "Earth Law". The book will cover topics on the rights of Nature and related movements, including animal rights, human environmental rights and the public trust doctrine.

100. In France, on 18 November 2018, the non-profit Compagnie des matins bleus launched a global appeal for a universal declaration for the rights of the tree, or declaración universal por los derechos del árbol, and for drafting a declaration and international convention for tree rights. On 5 April 2019, the declaration was presented to the French National Assembly at a colloquium on the preservation of noteworthy trees, and an online sign-on campaign was launched on 18 May 2019.

101. "Nature as a subject of rights? Sovereignty, liability and social conflicts", an international conference held in November 2018 by the Orientale University of Naples, Italy, focused on comparing Nature's rights movements, constitutional protections and indigenous approaches to Nature and animals' rights in the European Union and in the Americas.

102. In January 2019, the School of Law at Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, hosted a joint event between Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland and the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund to consider opportunities for developing Nature's Rights approaches within Northern Ireland and the wider United Kingdom.

103. The International Union for Conservation of Nature began its preparations in 2018–2019 for the 2020 Congress in Marseille, France. The World Commission on Environmental Law Ethics Specialist Group, in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature France Committee and with the support of 13 member organizations, advanced a foundational proposal for the 2020 Congress grounded in Earth Jurisprudence seeking to inform all levels of Congress planning. One key theme will be "Upholding rights, ensure effective and equitable governance" including, inter alia, the obligation to protect Nature.

104. In July 2018, the International Union for Conservation of Nature Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium hosted its annual gathering at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland. Presentations from 60 members of the World Commission on Environmental Law discussed, among other topics, the rights of Nature.

105. In November 2018, in Sharm el-Sheik, Egypt, a science-policy dialogue between science, policy and civil society on the role of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework discussed “Towards living in harmony with Nature by 2050”. Participants included the International Union for Conservation of Nature Commission on Ecosystem Management, the International Union of Biological Sciences, the European Commission, the European Union science-policy interface mechanism on biodiversity and ecosystem services, the Inter-American Institute for Global Change Research and the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

106. Nature’s Rights Romania and Pachamama Romania has promoted Earth Jurisprudence and the concept of Nature’s rights in a number of schools, colleges and universities, including Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Clinceni Sports College and Avram Iancu National College.

107. Nature’s Rights Tanzania is collaborating with six Kagera region districts to offer environmental education initiatives in local schools, which include training for teachers and local people on how to live in harmony with Nature.

108. On 7 December 2018, the University of Canterbury School of Law hosted a research workshop on indigenous water rights in comparative law with the support of the New Zealand Law Foundation. Global experts discussed indigenous rights to water and the role of legal rights for rivers.

109. Foundations such as Conservation of Nigerian Rivers, River Ethiopie Trust Foundation and Alltime Environmental Care Limited have commenced a national campaign on Earth Jurisprudence to generate awareness and support for the rights of Nature in Nigeria. An annual, national interactive dialogue on Harmony with Nature will be launched on 22 April 2020.

110. In the Republic of Korea, from 12 to 14 October 2018, People for Earth hosted its first International Conference for Ecozoic Culture under the theme “Ecological transformation on the Korean Peninsula and in East Asia”, with participation by 150 national and international experts. The conference examined current efforts in global environmental protection, social economy and sustainable cities; and it sought to link changes on the Korean Peninsula and in China and Japan to the values and practices of an ecological civilization. The conference included sessions on “Our efforts for systemic transition of civilization”, “Searching for alternative ecological economic systems”, and “Future tasks of eco-culture and continued education”.

111. People for Earth will convene the second International Conference for Ecozoic Culture from 20 to 22 September 2019, in Chuncheon, Gangwon Province. The theme will be “Restoration of Earth justice and the role of East Asia” and main sessions will include, “Harmony with the Earth, conversation on the future”, “The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and international proliferation of Earth jurisprudence”, “the rights of Nature and the future of the demilitarized zone” on transitioning to a new sustainable paradigm.

112. In January 2019, the secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the Institut de recherche pour le développement et the Centre international de droit comparé de l’environnement held a regional convention for the rights of the Pacific Ocean, marking the beginning of studies to be used in the drafting of a resolution recognizing the Pacific Ocean as its own legal entity with rights, and planned for adoption in 2020.

113. In the Philippines, Philippine Misereor Partnership Inc. is working with the National Secretariat for Social Action/Caritas Philippines, the development and advocacy arm of the Catholic Bishops' Conference on the Philippines, in drafting legislation to recognize Mother Nature's legal rights through law.

114. In 2019, researchers from the University of Oviedo, Spain, are working on publishing information regarding Harmony with Nature and have requested that a manifesto on the recognition of the rights of Nature be included in the journal *Science*.

115. In February 2019, the Tarragona Centre for Environmental Law Studies of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona, Spain, organized a seminar on the rights of Nature with the University of Hiroshima and, in June 2019, hosted the IV Tarragona International Environmental Law Colloquium, a forum for individuals to present and discuss their research and works-in-progress on recognizing Nature as a subject of rights.

116. The Second International Earth Rights Conference on the Rights of Nature was held in Sweden on 10 and 11 May 2019. A tribunal for the rights of Lake Vättern, the second largest freshwater body in Sweden, was held. The Conference adopted a declaration on the Rights of Lake Vättern and launched a European hub for the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature to coordinate campaigns to adopt rights of Nature laws throughout the continent.

117. In Switzerland, a signature campaign created by the non-governmental organization Rights of Mother Earth was launched in July 2018 to encourage the United Nations to engage in the formal drafting of a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth. As at May 2019, the campaign had collected over 260,000 signatures and aims to reach 1 million signatures by 2020. Rights of Mother Earth and Objectif Sciences International organized the first march for a Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth at the United Nations in Geneva in December 2018 in commemoration of the seventieth Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

118. Objectif Sciences International hosted its seventh annual international conference in Geneva on the rights of Nature from 10 to 13 December 2018, which brought together more than 30 speakers from networks working on rights of Nature initiatives. The next conference will be held from 9 to 11 December 2019.

119. Objectif Sciences International has also organized multiple science summer camps called meetings of excellence, to train and coach youth on real research projects related to the rights of Nature. The goal of this programme is to empower individuals to take responsibility for Mother Earth.

120. In the Netherlands, in June 2018, the North Sea Embassy was launched as a cultural project by the Parliament of Things to explore the legal personhood of the sea. In July 2019, the North Sea Embassy will be hosting a series of lectures and will be discussing the right to clean water, the rights of the Wadden Sea ecosystem and legal personhood for water.

121. In Uganda, the report "Recognizing rights of Mother Earth: entrenching Earth jurisprudence in Uganda" was released in November 2018, as part of a capacity-building strategy for lawyers and judiciary that includes guidance on pursuing rights of Nature in the Ugandan courts.

122. In the United Kingdom, in June 2019, the Gaia Foundation commemorated ten years since the passing of Thomas Berry, known as the "father of Earth jurisprudence". Undertaken in collaboration with the African Earth Jurisprudence movement, social media posts, newspaper and television interviews, and an online, interactive story "Demystifying Earth jurisprudence", reached a global audience.

123. *The Ecological Citizen*, an international peer-reviewed journal registered in the United Kingdom, continues to grow in readership and strength. An explicitly Earth-centred journal, it covers topics such as Earth jurisprudence, Earth-centred law, and the rights of Nature and Mother Earth.

124. In April 2019, the Findhorn Foundation in the United Kingdom, in collaboration with Nature's Rights and other organizations, hosted a conference on "Climate change and consciousness", with world-renowned presenters on the themes of Earth jurisprudence, indigenous wisdom and Nature's rights.

125. In the United States, the Universities of Oregon and of Coastal Carolina are conducting a survey project designed to map transnational rights of Nature networks and collect information on the attributes of individuals and organizations working on the rights of Nature. The project, led by Craig Kauffman and Pamela Martin, will serve to strengthen the networks and generate a global dataset of rights of Nature organizations.

126. The White Earth Band of Ojibwe, in Minnesota, has been focusing educational initiatives on Harmony with Nature with visual and hands-on learning regarding the traditional gathering and processing of wild rice. The goal is to use education on food security and climate change as an entry point to restoring Harmony with Nature.

127. At United Nations Headquarters in Spring 2020, the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations is partnering with the United Nations Harmony with Nature programme to present a debut performance-based exhibition on global warming created by Liam Sy Paquemar.<sup>1</sup>

128. The World Federation of United Nations Associations expanded the integration of Harmony with Nature into its Model United Nations programme by including a simulation and forming a partnership with Objectif Sciences International, which will bring high school students (February 2019) and university students (October 2019) together to negotiate resolutions on Harmony with Nature with the goal of forging consensus.

## V. Conclusion

129. Over the last decade, Earth jurisprudence can be seen as the fastest growing legal movement of the twenty-first century. The most significant consequence of acknowledging human interconnectedness and inextricability from the rest of the world has been casting the non-human world as a legal subject, with a number of jurisdictions adopting constitutional provisions, legislative initiatives and/or judicial decisions recognizing Earth's inherent rights.

130. Redefining legal education and legal theory have become central to the development of an Earth-centred approach, as reflected in the rapid growth of pedagogical curricula in colleges and universities worldwide, either through formal teachings on the subject or by exposing students to the subject in informal settings such as study groups, workshops, seminars and conferences.

131. The interlinkages between education, climate action and civil society are profoundly intertwined in a collective response to the need for a shift to an Earth-centred paradigm. Shared by all the various legal approaches is rejection of anthropocentrism, of human beings existing above and outside the network of relationships that define the surrounding cosmos.

132. Furthermore, many non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations have initiated campaigns and drafted declarations on the rights of Nature, calling upon the United Nations to engage in drafting a universal declaration

of the rights of Mother Earth, reflecting the growing worldwide commitment to protecting the Earth and future generations of all species.

133. The Earth-centred paradigm guided by the oldest jurisprudential traditions of humankind is inherently pluralistic. Harmony with Nature depends on respecting, protecting and nurturing diversity – of ecosystems, land and seascapes, cultures and traditions. Harmony with Nature calls for a deep appreciation of the many ways of being that life – not just human life, but all life – has imagined.

## **VI. Recommendations**

134. The detrimental impact of human activities on the Earth System has been widely acknowledged by the United Nations, international organizations, the international and scientific community, spiritual leaders, community and indigenous leaders and stakeholders worldwide. Faced with dire predictions of the existential threat that climate change represents to all species on Earth and rapidly deteriorating ecosystems of the natural world, the calls for a universal declaration on the rights of Mother Earth are growing. The United Nations is committed to remaining conversant with recent and forthcoming transformations and actions in law, policy, education and public engagement with regards to a just transition to an Earth-centred paradigm. Member States may therefore wish to consider the following:

(a) Engage in a formal dialogue among academics, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations regarding the drafting of a universal declaration of the rights of Mother Earth reflecting the growing worldwide commitment and calls to protecting Earth and future generations of all species. Such a universal declaration will provide an international moral compass to guide humanity to a better understanding of a life in Harmony with Nature. Earth Jurisprudence legislation adopted worldwide may serve as framework for such dialogue, which can be further supported through the Harmony with Nature website.

(b) Encourage the expanding Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, consisting of expert practitioners, academics and thinkers, to continue advancing the implementation of sustainable living in Harmony with Nature in furthering implementation of the 2030 Agenda.