

## EARTH RIGHTS

Until 1948, Universal Human Rights did not exist. But great things were achieved by great people and sixty years after the carnage of World War II, the United Nations General Assembly voted in favour of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We know Rights matter. We know Rights make a difference.

Organisations are springing up all the time, all driven by a harmonized vision for a better world; this is not about imposed values, which is what was debated in Copenhagen (i.e. the price we place on the planet's resources; the financing of reduction of carbon emissions by use of carbon trading etc), but the recognition of the intrinsic value of the planet, plants, animals, hills, forests, oceans and air, as a living being with whom we have an interdependent relationship, acknowledging Earth as a Whole.

On a global level, many groups are working to define the small print of a Universal Declaration of Earth Rights and bring Earth Rights into practice:

- In 1987, the UN World Commission on Environment and Development issued a call for a new charter that would set forth principals for sustainable development. Out of this was born [The Earth Charter](#) – which has made amazing progress, setting out 16 values and principals for a sustainable future.
- In 2003, [Cormac Cullinan](#), a South Africa lawyer who coined the term 'Wild Law' which are laws designed to regulate human participation within the wider earth community.
- [The Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund](#) is pioneering the work on Rights of Nature, or Earth Rights, assisting communities in the U.S. to adopt *first-in-the-nation* laws recognizing Rights of Nature – laws which change the status of natural communities and ecosystems from being regarded as *property* under the law to being recognized as *rights-bearing entities*. The Legal Defense Fund assisted the country of Ecuador to adopt Rights of Nature into the country's new constitution in 2008 and is working with communities both in the U.S. and internationally.
- September 2008, Ecuador, was the first to constitutionalize earth rights, granting inalienable rights to nature in their Constitution.
- Also in 2008, at a UN conference in Ireland, [Polly Higgins](#), a UK environmental lawyer, called for a Universal Declaration of Planetary Rights.
- On the 5th November 2009, representatives of Pacific Countries and Territories made an urgent call to action to all nations and the peoples of the World to join and protect, manage, maintain and sustain the cultural and natural integrity of the ocean for our ancestors and future generations.
- For Bolivia, December marked an important and historic step forward in climate change politics. In New York on 22 December, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution, which put the issue of Mother Earth rights as an item on the UN agenda.
- As a response to the failure of Copenhagen to come to any concrete democratic agreement, President Morales of Bolivia called for [The People's World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights](#), to be held in Bolivia on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of April, International Earth Day.

It's no secret that we are experiencing unprecedented degrees of global meltdown - from the landscape of our poles, to the catastrophic decline in bees or the dwindling supplies of oil. But are we finally waking up to not only man's hideous domination of one another, but our own barbaric domination of the Earth; it's resources, its living systems and its living communities?



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