

**CONCEPT NOTE OF THE VIRTUAL DIALOGUE ON HARMONY WITH NATURE TO
COMMEMORATE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER EARTH DAY**

THEME: EARTH JURISPRUDENCE

22 April – 22 June 2016

Background

Since 2009, the General Assembly has adopted eight consecutive resolutions on Harmony with Nature¹ including one designating 22 April as International Mother Earth Day. The aim of the General Assembly in adopting the above-mentioned resolutions has been to define a necessary and non-anthropocentric, or Earth-centered, worldview. At the core of this worldview is the recognition of the intrinsic value of Nature, within which relationships between humankind and the planet are symbiotic, interconnected and subject to the natural laws of the Universe.

Over the years, General Assembly resolutions have increasingly recognized the importance of giving due consideration to living in Harmony with Nature. On 24 September 2015, the General Assembly, at its seventieth session, adopted resolution 70/1, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which, under Sustainable Development Goal 12, target 12.8 states that Member States should ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness needed for sustainable development and lifestyles in Harmony with Nature.

Most recently, on 22 December 2015, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/208, specifically acknowledging Earth Jurisprudence in advancing Harmony with Nature. Earth Jurisprudence recognizes that the Earth is the source of laws that govern life. It provides a cohesive framework that underpins many disciplines weaving them together to create a more effective, holistic governance approach, one that reflects the integrated nature of the world in which we live. Earth Jurisprudence inspires citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world.

Indigenous peoples’ philosophies, spiritualities and traditional forms of knowledge worldwide express the understanding that human governance systems must be derived from the laws of the Earth and comply with them. Experts from around the world working in the natural and social sciences similarly recognize the need for an evolved, holistic worldview that must be rooted in respect for Nature and in the interdependence of the well-being of humankind and of the Earth.

Humanity is inextricably part of the community of life on Earth, and we cannot override the laws that maintain the homeostatic balances of the Earth System. Since the Scientific Revolution of 400 years ago, and particularly since the Industrial Revolution, we have witnessed the increasingly dire consequences of our actions in trying to control the Earth System. Economic growth for some has been achieved at the expense of the natural world, as well as of many human populations. Paired with unsustainable consumption and production patterns, our economic system has relentlessly altered the dynamics and functioning of the entire Earth system to a degree never before seen in human history.

¹ See <http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/documents.html>

Recent scientific findings now affirm that we are entering the sixth great mass extinction, where for the first time humans are at the root of potential civilizational and ecological collapse. Climate change, ocean acidification and loss of biodiversity, among other planetary warning signals, reflect how dysfunctional our relationship with the natural world has become.

In order to forge a balanced, healthy relationship between human activity and the Earth, there is an urgent need for society to reconsider how it perceives and interacts with the natural world. The Earth can no longer be seen as a source of raw materials to be commercialized, exploited, modified, altered, and privatized. Such a worldview has significantly affected the health of the Earth itself and, by default, the well-being of humankind.

Rising rates of poverty, famine and inequality reflect complex social realities that are intricately interwoven into the present ecological crisis, which, in turn, reflects poverty of spirit and at the expense of our life-giving source, the Earth.

Earth Jurisprudence offers a path towards embracing a worldview that will ensure that we live in Harmony with Nature. The virtual dialogue on Earth Jurisprudence is intended to spur a radical reappraisal of the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors shaping Human-Earth relationships, creating new transformational approaches toward an Earth-centered worldview. The experts and members of the Knowledge Network on Harmony with Nature participating in the Dialogue will offer valuable insights and recommendations for implementing an Earth Jurisprudence worldview.

Objectives

Consistent with these findings, the Virtual Dialogue will examine the key characteristics of a new, Earth-centered (non-anthropocentric) paradigm – Earth Jurisprudence – and offer specific recommendations and proposals to the United Nations and other relevant entities on how to adjust governance policies and sustainable development patterns consistent with this paradigm. These recommendations will consider the fact that some countries recognize the rights of nature in law.

Given the complexity of the task, the Virtual Dialogue will also develop recommendations for processes by which:

- a) The Knowledge Network of experts in Earth-centered governance and life can be expanded;
- b) Current and new members of the Knowledge Network can exchange information and develop additional recommendations for the United Nations and other relevant entities regarding steps towards living a life in Harmony with Nature.

Participants, in their recommendations, will reflect the core paradigm and worldview of Earth Jurisprudence: that is, the modern science and philosophy of the fundamental interconnections between humanity and the natural world.