

5. Commitment to a Culture of Sustainability and Care for the Earth.

Numberless men and women of all regions and religions strive to lead lives in a spirit of mutual harmony, interdependence, and **respect for the Earth, its living beings and ecosystems**. Nevertheless, in most parts of the world, pollution contaminates the soil, air and water; deforestation and over-reliance on fossil fuels contribute to climate change; habitats are destroyed and species are fished or hunted to extinction. Over-exploitation and unjust use of natural resources increases conflict and poverty among people and harms other forms of life. Too often, the poorest populations, though they have the smallest impact, bear the brunt of the damage done to the planet's atmosphere, land and oceans.

a) In the religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions of humankind we find the directive: You shall not be greedy! Or in positive terms: Remember the good of all! Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this directive: We should help provide – to the best of our ability – for the needs and well-being of others, including of today's and tomorrow's children. The Earth, with its **finite resources**, is shared by our **one human family**. It sustains us and many forms of life, and calls for our respect and care. Many religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions place us within the interdependent web of life; at the same time, they accord us a distinctive role and affirm that our gifts of knowledge and of craft place upon us the obligation to use these gifts wisely to foster the common good.

b) All of us have the responsibility to minimize, as much as we can, our impact on the Earth, to refrain from treating living beings and the environment as mere things for personal use and enjoyment, and to consider the effects of our actions on future generations. Caring and prudent use of resources is based on **fairness in consumption** and takes into account limits on what ecosystems can bear. Wherever heedless domination by human beings over the Earth and other living beings is taught, wherever abuse of the environment is tolerated, and wherever development surpasses sustainable limits, we have the duty to speak up, to change our practices, and to moderate our lifestyles.

c) Young people should be encouraged to appreciate that a good life is not a life of outsized consumption or amassing material possessions. **A good life strikes a balance** between one's needs, the needs of others, and the health of the planet. Education about the environment and sustainable living should become part of the school curricula in every country of the world.

d) To be authentically human in the spirit of our religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions, means the following: Our relationship with each other and with the larger living world should be based on respect, care and gratitude. All traditions teach that the Earth is a source of wonder and wisdom. Its vitality, diversity, and beauty are held in trust for everyone including those who will come after us. The global environmental crisis is urgent and is deepening. The planet and its countless forms of life are in danger. **Time is running out**. We must act with love and compassion, and for justice and fairness – for the flourishing of the whole Earth community.

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