



## **General Assembly Interactive Dialogue on Harmony with Nature to Commemorate International Mother Earth**

### ***“Harmony with Nature and Biodiversity: Contributions of Ecological Economics and Earth-centered law”***

*Friday, 22 April 2022, 10am – 1pm; 3pm – 6pm  
Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York*

#### **Concept Note**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature, and in which wildlife and other living species are protected. However, unsustainable economic systems have endangered all forms of life, human and non-human – exemplified in the steep loss of biodiversity from terrestrial to aquatic ecosystems, and the climate crisis approaching a point of no return. A reversal of the current path demands nothing less than a paradigm shift.

There have been hopeful advances and signs of a shift to an Earth-centered paradigm for well over a decade as reflected in approaches to law, public policy, economics, and education<sup>1</sup>. For instance, alternatives to gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of economic development and well-being, taking into account Nature’s contribution to peoples are entering policy arenas at various levels of government, civil society, and academia<sup>2</sup>. And discussions around new approaches to ecological economies are also taking place in various countries. These discussions have gained more visibility and momentum in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Earth-centered law approaches continue to be incorporated in national legislation in an increasing number of countries worldwide. In some instances, the judiciary has demanded State action affirming or restoring the rights of rivers, forests, or glaciers, while in other instances, municipal or local legislative bodies have recognized the rights of Nature/Mother Earth. The recognition of this legal personhood based on customary or indigenous law exemplifies the increasing acceptance of indigenous peoples’ cosmogony into the body of Western positive law.

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<sup>1</sup> For further information: [www.harmonywithnatureun.org](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org) - SG Reports on Harmony with Nature A/65/314, A/66/302, A/67/317, A/68/325/Corr.1, A/69/322, A/70/268, A/72/175, A/73/221, A/74/236, A/75/266 and its Supplement

<sup>2</sup> For example, Sustainable Development Index, Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI), Thriving Places Index (TPI), Green GDP, Better Life Index (BLI), Inclusive Wealth Index (IWI), Happy Planet Index (HPI), Gross National Happiness Index, and other related initiatives such as the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI).

Several court rulings provide evidence that indigenous narratives are increasingly being recognized as an integral part of the concept of legal pluralism.

Education is another critical element to enable and empower people to engage with ecological, social and climate injustices and to reassess existing narratives regarding our relationship with Nature. Elected officials, legislators, judges, social movements, NGOs, civil society groups, educators, researchers, students, activists, young people, and communities are gaining the tools needed to make informed decisions based on scientific knowledge in dialogue with the wisdom of ancient cultures. At the same time, interventions by academia and civil society in both formal and informal education on Earth-centered law approaches, has resulted in changes in curricula, greater public engagement, and growing awareness worldwide<sup>3</sup>. Teachers and students can support the promotion of ecological economies and Earth-centered policies. Furthermore, the epistemological parity between indigenous and non-indigenous knowledge systems has informed court rulings and policies.

Science teaches us about the interconnections between human and non-human living elements in Nature and contributes to further our understanding of the magnitude of the climate change crisis. While modern science and technology offer solutions for climate adaptation and mitigation, they alone cannot solve the global polycrisis humankind faces.

It is important to consider an Earth-centered approach in the transformation of law and economics. The values advanced by ecological economics and Earth-centered law, such as fairness, equity, justice, cooperation, dialogue, inclusion, comprehension, agreement, respect, and mutual inspiration complement each other in the journey to move beyond the Anthropocene epoch. Earth-centered approaches calls on humanity to listen to, take inspiration from, and care for the Planet that sustains us, and recognize that Nature is, and should be, a source of law, ethics and how we govern ourselves.

The window of opportunity to act is brief and rapidly closing. If the existence of the human species is to continue, then we must walk and act differently in relation to each other, to other species and to the Planet.

The United Nations General Assembly is uniquely placed to be the convenor of dialogue on such transformations. Since 2009, the General Assembly has adopted twelve consecutive resolutions on Harmony with Nature, as well as the resolution A/RES/63/278 designating 22 April as International Mother Earth Day. The resolutions contain different perspectives regarding the construction of a new, non-anthropocentric paradigm in which the fundamental basis for right and wrong action concerning the environment is grounded not solely in individualistic human concerns. The aim of the General Assembly in adopting these resolutions has been to promote and reflect upon a non-anthropocentric, or Earth-centered, worldview. At the core of this worldview is the recognition of the intrinsic value of Nature, as one of her multiple values, within which relationships between humankind and the Planet are symbiotic, interconnected and in harmony with the natural laws of the Universe.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.harmonywithnatureun.org/references](http://www.harmonywithnatureun.org/references) - 2020 Supplement to the SG Report on Harmony with Nature (A/75/266).

## Objective

It is in this context, that the President of the General Assembly is convening an interactive dialogue, at the plenary meetings to be convened during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day on 22 April 2022, as mandated in General Assembly Resolution 75/220 of 21 December 2020. This interactive dialogue will discuss the relationship between harmony with nature and the protection of biological diversity, with the aim to inspire citizens and societies to reconsider how they interact with the natural world in the context of sustainable development

This year, the Interactive Dialogue on Harmony with Nature will be convened under the theme “*Harmony with Nature and Biodiversity: Ecological economics and Earth-centered law*”. Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic presents a unique opportunity to build back better, this interactive dialogue will highlight initiatives and advances in ecological economics and Earth-centered law, in support of the transformative paradigm necessary to build back better, a world that lives in Harmony with Nature.

The following questions are proposed to guide discussions:

1. What elements must be present in the design of the Earth-centered paradigm?
2. How can a dialogue between Ecological economics and Earth-centered law be established around the axis of their shared aspirations?
3. How can we ensure that evidence-based data can be incorporated when adopting Ecological economics and Earth-centered law?