

D | R | I

HUMAN AND GLOBAL
DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

The Initiative “Human Responsibilities”

The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities

The DRI at a glance

The DRI is a non-profit and independent **research and educational institute** that works on an interdisciplinary basis and promotes dialogue between economy, science and culture.

Human development and global progress are linked - exploring this is the strength of the DRI. It is active in three areas - research, dialogue and education. In the field of education, the DRI promotes and propagates the initiative to amend the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to include a **Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities** - as an ethical **guideline for human development and global progress in the 21st century**.

Human development and global progress

Human development and global progress are linked. This is illustrated by the following three examples:

1. **Modern states need people who are mature in terms of consciousness and history.** Modern institutions, such as a constitutional democracy, can only function with people whose way of living is based on a high level of human consciousness development.
2. **The change of our human self-image through the attribution of human rights.** This change in people's self-image in the field of human cultural development had far-reaching con-

sequences for global development and **continues to shape constitutions, legal systems and international relations to this day**, based on the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights.

3. **The Franco-German Friendship.** France and Germany regarded each other as hereditary enemies for a long time. This **hatred was only overcome and replaced by friendship in an act of deliberate change of consciousness** after the Second World War. Today the relationships are exceptionally constructive. The reason for this was a change in consciousness.

Why Human Responsibilities?

The General Declaration of Human rights has been successful in changing and declaring that human beings naturally have inalienable rights to which they are entitled. This changed self-image, which was initially only an assertion, solidified over time to a certainty in our self-understanding and was the key to the development of a more humane and just society.

Another such change in our self-image could be the key to humanity's ability to tackle some of the great and pressing challenges of the 21st century: **the declaration that man has natural responsibilities in addition to natural rights**. From a linguistic point of view, this logic is obvious: where there are rights, there are also obligations.

This simple principle is generally accepted in jurisprudence; as for the field of our self-image, however, so far, only rights have been defined, no duties.

If this gap could be closed by anchoring the idea that man has not only rights but also obligations in our self-image, a new **basis** would be created to meet the **challenges of the 21st century - climate, environment, resources, value change, justice and existential crises**.

It would not be intended to impose any legally binding obligations, which would be difficult to implement, but a **new moral-ethical guiding star**.

The Initiative at the United Nations

Several initiatives have taken up this challenge, most prominently the InterAction Council, an association of statesmen, thought leaders, religious leaders and prominent scientists, including M. Gorbachev, F. Vranitsky, J. Carter, H. Schmidt, Kardinal F. König, C.F. and R. von Weizsäcker and many others.

In 1997, on the 50th anniversary of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", the Council proposed a "Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities" to be adopted by the United Nations (UN).

The following is the preamble to the proposed declaration:

"Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world and implies obligations or responsibilities,

whereas the exclusive insistence on rights can result in conflict, division, and endless dispute, and the neglect of human responsibilities can lead to lawlessness and chaos,

whereas the rule of law and the promotion of human rights depend on the readiness of men and women to act justly,

whereas global problems demand global solutions which can only be achieved through ideas, values, and norms respected by all cultures and societies,

whereas all people, to the best of their knowledge and ability, have a responsibility to foster a better social order, both at home and globally, a goal which cannot be achieved by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone,

whereas human aspirations for progress and improvement can only be realized by agreed values and standards applying to all people and institutions at all times,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly

proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities as a common standard for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall contribute to the advancement of communities and to the enlightenment of all their members. We, the peoples of the world thus renew and reinforce commitments already proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: namely, the full acceptance of the dignity of all people; their inalienable freedom and equality, and their solidarity with one another. Awareness and acceptance of these responsibilities should be taught and promoted throughout the world."

In the following, the proposed declaration defines human responsibilities in these five areas:

- **Fundamental principles for humanity**
- **Nonviolence and respect for life**
- **Justice and solidarity**
- **Truthfulness and tolerance**
- **Mutual respect and partnership**

The full text is available on the DRI website development-institute.org/english

An initiative in Austria

The Austrian Society for Future Policy has issued a **General Declaration on Human Responsibility**, which defines the responsibility of the individual on three levels and - according to the goal - postulates them normatively: **responsibility for yourself, responsibility for others and responsibility for the environment.**

„It is not sufficient only to demand rights for oneself without realizing that more rights and abilities also entail more obligations.

Here, however, we are not talking about laws whose violation is subject to sanctions, but about voluntarily assumed and internalized humanitarian obligations which are intended to guide us as carriers of human rights in actions and omissions.

They arise from the insight into the responsibility of each individual for themselves, their fellow human beings and the environment.

Their compliance should contribute to moral perfection. Only through the improvement of many individuals can the improvement of humanity progress.

It is therefore necessary that every individual as a responsible person ensures, by word and deed, balance between sought rights and obligations inseparable from them".

Responsibility towards oneself

Every person should, according to their individual possibilities,

- 1. sharpen their conscience and let themselves be guided by it*
- 2. perceive and positively develop their individual abilities*
- 3. constantly expand their knowledge in order to better understand the world and themselves*
- 4. learn from their mistakes and be vigilant towards themselves*
- 5. openly and in a spirit of tolerance represent their own well-considered point of view*
- 6. be aware of their dignity as a human being and preserve this dignity*
- 7. moderate their own claims.*

Responsibility towards others

Every person should, according to their individual possibilities,

- 8. recognize and stand up for the dignity and rights of others*
- 9. support people selflessly and help them when they are in need*
- 10. assist the socially disadvantaged and disabled*
- 11. take the opinions of others seriously, but stand up against intolerance*
- 12. stand up for diversity of opinion as an expression of intellectual freedom*
- 13. respect the foreign and unfamiliar and accept other cultures*
- 14. reduce prejudices by searching for reliable information, knowledge and enlightenment*
- 15. pass on knowledge and experience in an understandable way*
- 16. make their best endeavors to promote a humane and just society and defend democracy and its institutions*
- 17. make sensible use of the instruments for democratic decision-making*
- 18. be willing to assume functions in the community appropriate to their own abilities*
- 19. not abuse personal power and oppose abuses of power by others*
- 20. delegate tasks and responsibilities sensibly.*

Responsibility towards the environment

Every person should, according to their individual possibilities,

- 21. feel as a conscious and therefore responsible part of nature*
- 22. bear responsibility towards posterity*

- 23. help to protect life in all its diversity and to use the limited resources of the planet in an environmentally friendly manner*
- 24. be aware of the ethical limits of what is feasible*
- 25. work for a balance between world population and prosperity so that a humane existence can be achieved for all*
- 26. oppose discernible ecologically undesirable developments*
- 27. cultivate and develop cultural values.*

The vision of a responsible society

Human development and global progress are linked.

**Humanity will only be able to tackle the challenges of the 21st century,
if it takes both aspects into account.**

**The DRI supports the
General Declaration of Human Responsibilities
and the
General Declaration of Human Responsibility
as ethical guiding stars**

**and suggests,
to use these declarations as a foundation of political, social and cultural discussions,
at international, national, institutional and personal level,**

**and - where possible – to integrate them in models for
political decisions, entrepreneurial activity and personal action.**

**Supporters of this declaration are pioneers of a new ethical movement which a large number of re-
nowned thought leaders and statesmen around the globe have already joined.**

Contact

Human and Global Development Research Institute

Office Vienna | Ferstelgasse 6 | 1090 Vienna | Austria

www.development-institute.org | office@development-institute.org

D | R | I

HUMAN AND GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE