



OPENING SPEECH – CHARTER ON THE LAW OF THE LIVING

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Ladies and Gentlemen Presidents,
Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen of the United Nations family,
Ladies and Gentlemen, members of the University community,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

1. In 2008, Ecuador became the first nation to grant constitutional rights to Nature. In 2009, the Plurinational State of Bolivia recognized in its Constitution the principles of *Buen Vivir* (Good Living) as guides for state action. These two events led the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim 22 April International Mother Earth Day and to adopt its first resolution on Harmony with Nature, which are the origin of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme. At that moment, these countries may not have been fully aware of the legal and policy implications their non-anthropocentric decisions would have around the world a decade later.

2. During this last decade, a great many Rights of Nature laws and “soft law” declarations on the Rights of Nature, also known as Earth Jurisprudence, have been adopted by an increasing number of United Nations Member States and institutions around the world. Humankind thus accepts the reality that its well-being depends upon the well-being of the Earth. Humankind further realizes that, in order to maintain all forms of life on the planet and ensure the survival of future generations of all species, it is necessary to live in Harmony with Nature and to be guided by her laws.

3. Since its inception, the provisions adopted in environmental law have been anthropocentric and globally treat Nature as a thing, rendering her protection inadequate and fragile. However, the human right to life is meaningless if the existence of the ecosystems that support humankind is not protected by law. Faced with the decline of Nature and the massive extinction of biodiversity, also known as the “sixth extinction”, the development of Earth Jurisprudence refers more broadly to the protection of Nature, of which animals are an integral part.

4. This new, non-anthropocentric paradigm of Harmony with Nature is the subject of scientific research around the world. Thus, the “Charter on the Law of the Living”, which will be proclaimed in a few minutes, further emphasizes the importance of this paradigm. The Charter is the result of the scientific trilogy on the legal personhood of animals, a French research programme initiated within the University of Toulon. This trilogy moved the spirits with the possibility and the potentiality of integration into positive law of the concept of non-human personhood further reinforced by the proclamation on 29 March 2019 of the Toulon Declaration on the legal personhood of the animal.

5. Through this trilogy, a new figure of the jurist emerges : the jurist of the Living. Their field of intervention goes beyond the limits and current technical fields of environmental law and, in focusing to protect the Living, they are supported by Earth Jurisprudence and inspired by the

work of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Programme. Therefore, the “Charter on the Law of the Living” is intended to inspire non-anthropocentric institutional reforms throughout the world. It is encouraging to note that these initiatives echo the call for a peaceful, virtuous and harmonious coexistence between humanity and the rest of the Living who inhabit the planet.

6. I would like to congratulate law professors and researchers of the University of Toulon, France, in particular Caroline Regad and Cédric Riot who are Expert members of the United Nations Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network, I would also like to congratulate the professors, researchers and practitioners of many universities and internationally recognized institutions as well as students and members of civil society who have made possible this recognition of Earth Jurisprudence inspired by the footprint of animals.

Thank you for your attention.