

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-SPECIESIST PETITION

*Universal Declaration of the
Rights
of Sentient Beings*

Full text of the Declaration

Considering that recognition of the inherent dignity of all sentient beings, human and non-human, and of their equal and inalienable rights, constitutes the foundation of liberty, equality, equity, justice, tolerance, compassion and peace in the world.

Considering that disregard and contempt for the rights of sentient beings, human and non-human, have led to acts of barbarity, violence and exploitation that outrage the conscience of Humanity, and that the advent of a world in which all sentient beings shall enjoy freedom to live, speak and believe, freed from terror, want, violence and exploitation, has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of Humanity.

Considering that it is essential that the fundamental rights of sentient beings, human and non-human, be protected by the rule of law, so that they are not compelled, as a last resort, to rebel against supremacism, tyranny, violence, oppression and exploitation.

Considering that it is essential to encourage the development of non-violent and equal relationships between human and non-human beings, both in relations among humans and in relations between species.

Considering that it is essential to proclaim and enact fundamental rights for sentient beings in a manner that respects the dignity and worth of human and non-human beings, as well as the equal rights of all sentient beings; and that better standards of life must accordingly be established in a larger freedom and with respect for the fundamental rights of all, human and non-human.

Considering that Member States have pledged themselves to achieve, in cooperation with the United Nations, the universal and effective respect for the rights and fundamental freedoms of sentient beings.

Considering a common understanding of these rights and freedoms for all sentient beings is of the greatest importance for the full realisation of this pledge.

We declare this Universal Declaration of the Rights of Sentient Beings as a common standard of achievement for all sentient beings, peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article premier

All sentient beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience. Human persons must act towards one another, and towards non-human persons, in a spirit of brotherhood, tolerance, equality, compassion, justice and respect for their inalienable personal interests.

The rights of non-human persons are functional and therefore depend on their relative and specific interests, aimed at maximising their pleasure or happiness. These rights are also shaped by the instinctive relationships that have governed non-human relations between species since their emergence.

No person may be the object of ownership, nor be regarded as the property of another.

All sentient beings are equally regarded as subjects of law.

Article 2

- 1 Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, species, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- 2 Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, legal or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 3

Every human and non-human sentient person has the right to life, liberty and security of person, save, with regard to non-human persons, for indispensable vital exceptions, previously established by law, necessary to the survival of a limited number of human persons, in accordance with principles of proportionality and subsidiarity of strict interpretation, and limited to the time necessary to find an alternative solution ensuring satisfactory conditions of survival for the said human group.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery, the exploitation and the trafficking of sentient beings shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

- 1 Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.
- 2 Non-human persons must enjoy a functional non-human legal personhood guaranteeing them the enjoyment and protection of their essential, non-alienable rights, including the right to live, the right not to suffer, save for the exception provided for in Article 3, and the right to be a subject of law in their own right, never to be exploited.
- 3 Every person is a subject of law who may bring proceedings before the Courts and tribunals in order to secure the defence of their inalienable fundamental rights. Non-human persons must be represented in court by autonomous and independent associations having no conflict of interest with those of the non-human persons they are legally bound to represent, defend and protect.

Article 7

All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any distinction to equal, functional protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination, oppression, or form of exploitation or violence in violation of this Declaration, and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted to them by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be arbitrarily arrested, detained, save for the exception provided for in Article 3, exiled or exploited.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of their rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against them.

Article 11

- 1 Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which they have had all the guarantees necessary for their defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.
- 3 Non-human persons are irrefragably declared to bear no criminal responsibility for their acts. Civil liability for any harm they may have caused must be capable of being established against the human person who has assumed their companionship, if that person can be identified. Failing that, the law must treat such harm as being of natural origin, and shall invite any human person wishing to guard against it to insure against this specific type of risk.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home, territory, environment or correspondence, nor to attacks upon their honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks, save for the exception provided for in Article 3.

Article 13

- 1 Everyone has the right to freedom of movement, save for the exception provided for in Article 3, and to choose their residence within a State.
- 2 Everyone has the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.
- 3 Everyone has the right to the protection of their environment, so as to enable them to meet the fundamental needs of their species.
- 4 Everyone has the right to have public spaces laid out in such a way as to guarantee the protection and fulfilment of the fundamental needs of their species.

Article 14

- 1 In the face of persecution, everyone who is human has the right to seek and to enjoy asylum in other countries. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from a non-political crime or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.
- 2 Every non-human person has the right to be protected against acts of violence, save for the exception provided for in Article 3.
- 3 Every human person has the right to defend themselves against the aggression of a non-human person that endangers their life or health, or that of other human or non-human persons, in accordance with principles of proportionality and subsidiarity of strict interpretation, limited to the time necessary to find an alternative solution ensuring the necessary and sufficient safety of the persons threatened.

Article 15

- 1 Every human person has the right to a nationality.
- 2 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality nor denied the right to change their nationality.

Article 16

- 1 From the age of nubility, every human person, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, has the right to marry and to found a family. Members of a couple are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.
- 2 Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
- 3 The family is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

- 1 Everyone, alone as well as in association with others, has the right to own property.
- 2 No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their property.
- 3 Every non-human person has the right to be granted a sufficient space, protected against all harm, so as to enable them to meet the fundamental needs of their species. Non-human persons shall be recognised as owners of their protected environments. Within these, they shall exercise their inalienable rights as sovereign nations.

Article 18

Every human person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19

Every human person has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

- 1 Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- 2 No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Article 21

- 1 Every human person has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
- 2 Every human person has the right of equal access to public service in their country.
- 3 The will of human persons shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections, held by universal and equal suffrage and by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.
- 4 Every sentient person has the right to bring proceedings to defend their rights and, where applicable, to be represented therein by the competent body designated by law.

Article 22

Every human person, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for their dignity and the free development of their personality.

Article 23

- 1 Every human person has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
- 2 Every human person, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
- 3 Every sentient person who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for themselves and their family an existence worthy of human dignity, supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
- 4 Every human person has the right to form and to join trade unions with others for the protection of their interests.

Article 24

Every sentient person has the right to rest and leisure, including a reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

- 1 Every sentient person has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and wellbeing of themselves and of their family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control.
- 2 Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All human children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

- 1 Every human person has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- 2 Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for the rights of sentient beings and for fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial or religious groups, and among all sentient animal species, as well as the development of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 27

- 1 Everyone has the right freely to take part in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
- 2 Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which they are the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised.

Article 29

- 1 Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of their personality is possible.
- 2 In the exercise of their rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others, and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.
- 3 These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.