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Tehran Declaration on Human Rights and the Environment

Participants at the International Conference on Human Rights and the Environment held in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, on 13–14 May 2009 hosted by the UNESCO Chair for Human Rights and Democracy at Shahid Beheshti University with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme:

Convinced that stewardship of the environment is a fundamental responsibility of all people and that individuals and communities have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment;

Believing that the environment should be respected both for its intrinsic value and for the material and spiritual benefits it provides;

Noting that Islam provides valuable principles that contribute to the protection of the environment;

Aware that the international community is preparing for crucial negotiations on climate change in Copenhagen in December 2009;

Taking note of the International Conference on Environment, Peace and the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures (Tehran, 2005), and its outcome, the Tehran Communiqué;

Recalling that the 1968 Tehran Proclamation on Human Rights recognized that the widening gap between economically developed and developing countries impedes the realization of human rights and that the achievement of lasting progress in the implementation of human rights is dependent upon sound and effective national and international policies of economic and social development;

Recalling also that the norms that give guidance to States in exercising this stewardship have been expressed in a range of human rights and other international instruments;[1]

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Emphasizing that effective alleviation of poverty constitutes a fundamental aspect of achieving sustainable development;

Mindful that respect for human rights and the environment should aim, *inter alia*, at promoting dialogue, understanding, peace, harmony, cultural diversity and enhancement of the conservation of biological diversity;

Emphasizing the importance of strong democratic institutions, providing environmental information and ensuring public participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters at the national and international levels;

Noting that the achievement of sustainability includes the right of communities to define, identify, access, manage and control their heritage;

Recognizing that the promotion of human rights includes respect for those communities whose ways of life, means of subsistence, knowledge and practices depend directly on their local environment;

Recognizing that the environmental challenges facing countries of this region all include a human rights dimension, namely: poverty, the status of women, education of children, population growth, energy, climate change, water shortage, desertification and rapid urbanization.

Therefore recommend that:

1. All states participating in the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC) to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009 ensure that appropriate measures are taken and requisite financing is provided for mitigation and adaptation to address the impacts that climate change has on the full realization of human rights and the well-being of all people.
2. Specific provisions be included in national constitutions and legislation in relation to the right to a clean and healthy environment as a fundamental aspect of the achievement of human rights.
3. States and educational institutions substantially enhance the level of environmental education in general as well as the capacity of those engaged in teaching, research and scholarship in environmental law.
4. Judges in the region be encouraged to enhance access to justice for the achievement of environmental sustainability for all levels of society, including through the removal of legal impediments to public interest litigation.
5. All sections of the media promote environmental education and play a role in enhancing the accountability of governmental agencies in the management of the environment.

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6. All States in the region become members of ail relevant environmental and human rights conventions, including, *inter alia*, the 1998 *Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters*.
7. All States in the region implement fully the obligations that they have undertaken under international human rights instruments and all additional protocols which contribute to the safeguarding of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.
8. Civil society, including both women and men and non-governmental organisations, actively participate with governments and communities on the basis of equality in the development and implementation of sustainable development programmes.
9. The Islamic Republic of Iran, in partnership with States in the region, develop a Regional Strategy on Environmental Sustainability which includes all environmental, economic cultural and/social dimensions of sustainability, within a South-South framework and through the sharing of national experience.
10. A Regional Strategy on Environmental Sustainability should include, as a minimum, programmes and other concrete actions for: the effective alleviation of poverty; capacity building in environmental law and the environmental sciences; the empowerment of women in environmental matters; promoting the well-being of children; lowering the collective and individual carbon footprint; reforestation and afforestation programmes and introducing comprehensive recycling programmes; strengthening the legal, scientific, financial and human capacity for environmental monitoring and management of governmental and private sector development, including through the increased use of environmental planning and environmental impact assessment processes; and capacity building and strengthening of Ministries and Departments of the Environment and Environmental Protection Agencies.
11. Universities in the region, in partnership with the sponsors of and participants in this International Conference on Human Rights and the Environment, and representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme, the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law and the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law, lend scientific and technical support for the drafting of a Regional Strategy on Environmental Sustainability, including the organization of regular meetings to assist in the operational follow-up of the Strategy.

ENDNOTE

1. These include the 1948 *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, the 1966 *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the 1972 *Declaration of the United Motions Conference on the Human Environment*, the 1982 *United Nations World Charter for Nature*, the 1993 *Declaration*

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of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, the 1993 *Vienna Declaration on Human Rights*, the 1994 *United Nations Draft Declaration of Principles on Human Rights and the Environment*, the 1998 *Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice*, the 1999 *Declaration of Bizkaia on the Right to the Environment* the 2000 *United Nations Millennium Development Goals*, the 2002 *Johannesburg Plan of Implementation*, the 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, the 2004 *Draft IUCN International Covenant on Environment and Development*, the 2004 *Earth Charter* and the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*.

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