

Exploring Global Environmental Ethics

Maxwell Borjor Achuk Eba

Department of History and International Studies, University of Calabar,
Cross River State, Nigeria.

*e-mail: raremaxxy@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The problem of environmental degradation is not limited to any particular country or region but it is global. In fact, the concern for environmental problems has never been as high as it is now. It is a high time to engage earth's citizen in a dynamic process about the environmental realities of today's world. Attitudes and Ethics towards the use of environmental resources must change our practices in the environment, we must re-educate ourselves to treat the environment with greater caution and control. It is this realization that gives 'environmental attitude', 'environmental ethics', environmental practices' a place of prime importance in Environmental Degradation. As culture carries a whole set of attitudes, ethics, practices and perspectives of one's relationship with others including environment, there have been calls from many environmental scholars for the need for a global environmental ethics. This article brightens the non-prudential dimensions of global environmental affairs and explains how a focus on the way humans mistreat each other can serve as a central ethical focus for understanding and addressing environmental injustice. Overall, it aims to show the importance of The Earth Charter's vision of universal responsibility towards environmental protection. The Charter acknowledges that although comprising local communities, the Earth is also one whole community

Keywords: Environmental Crisis; environmental ethics, Globalization, The Earth Charter.

INTRODUCTION

The world faces an environmental crisis of global proportions. It is now widely acknowledged that environmental problems affecting life in one part of the world will ultimately affect life in other parts. It is therefore no longer adequate only to consider what is happening in a given locality or to address environmental problems at the local level alone. In response to this realisation, environmentalism has become a global movement (Ogar & Ogar 2019; Basse 2020). Most environmental activists and policy-makers agree that global problems require international cooperation if they are to be addressed and resolved. Many are beginning to believe that the best way to foster the required cooperation is to promote a global ethic. International organisations such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the United Nations Environment Programme, and non-governmental organisations like the World Wildlife Fund for Nature and Greenpeace International, have evolved to address

international environmental issues and problems. Although differing in remit and focus, all these bodies claim international relevance and reach. Whether successfully or not, they claim to represent the interests of the „global community’. Equally, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), born of the necessity to address environmental issues at a global level, in 1987, produced *Our Common Future*, a report written by a transnational committee chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister Go Harlem Brundtland. The aim of this research is to bring about international cooperation in the environmental field. Following what became known as the Brundtland report came the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. 180 countries participated in what was known as the “Earth Summit” which rendered it the largest international conference ever held (Osborn & Bigg 2013). Following the Earth Summit, UNCED called for the creation of a new charter that would set forth fundamental principles for sustainable development. The resulting Earth Charter was officially launched at the Peace Palace in The Hague on June 29th 2000. The ongoing mission of the Charter initiative is to establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. The Earth Charter is the only attempt to codify a global environmental ethic and is a clear indication that environmental ethical discourse has gone global.

Environmental philosophers such as Holmes Rolston (1991), J Baird Callicott, and Peter Singer, have recently been arguing for the need for environmental ethics and that environmental philosophy consider ethics at a global level. A critical examination of the philosophical arguments for why global ethics are desirable is one of the key focus of this research.

MAN, NATURE, CULTURE AND HIS BIOPHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

Russian Environmental Policy emphasized that an environmental culture inclusive of Environmental Attitudes, Environmental Ethics and Environmental Practices should become part of human culture through series of educational processes of inculcation. Cultures consolidates all societal sectors on the grounds of the community of interests of the state, society, and business in building capacity for a healthy environment. Culture not only determines human behaviour but also guides behaviour and interprets others behaviour (Ayor & Odey 2018). Cultures is a capability of people to use environmental knowledge and skills in their practical activity. An individual’s environmental culture includes his/her environmental behaviour. Thus, people who value other species highly will be concerned about environmental conditions that threaten those valued objects of their own environment (Ayor, Erim & Majuk 2011). Though, nature is capable of providing man with everything that he needs not only for self-sustenance, but also for making his life fully comfortable and shapes the way people perceive the world and how people interact with it. Culture is a very practical and concrete determinant for sustainable development. If the people are to be supportive of and involved in such change at the level of community, household or individual, they will need to be rooted in the cultural specificity of the area or region. Therefore, culture based environmental education is essential in enabling people to use their ethical values to make informed and ethical choices (Ayor & Erim 2010).

Man's attitude towards his biophysical environment is connected with his ethics, outlook and knowledge in which actions and attitudes towards environment are determined by ethics and reflects both in his standard of living and in his biophysical surroundings. Various countries have different cultural traditions – and many subcultures – that affect the formation of environmental awareness, knowledge, attitudes, ethics, and practices (Mendie & Eyo 2016). Environmental Education also enriches Environmental Ethics in some people. Environmental Ethics concerns itself with judgements of approval and disapproval, judgements as to the rightness or wrongness, goodness or badness, virtue or vice, desirability or wisdom of actions, disposition, ends, objects, or states of affairs (Bassey and Eyo 2020). It deal more specifically with humans interaction and practices with the natural environment with respect to various environmental existences of the social beings situated in a particular physical environment. The reason being that local environmental forces, conditions and circumstances determines the existence, growth and development of locally available biotic and the abiotic components, their interrelationship, interdependences and co-existence to the corset root.

Today, the environmental degradation is a matter of great concern before mankind. Over the last few decades the delicate ecosystem of our planet is facing the danger of destruction due to the intervention of human beings. In the development race man has ruthlessly consuming natural resources and polluting environment. Rapid damage to environment and depletion of nature's stock of resources at a faster rate started from the time of industrial revolution. Demand for more and more resources has been ever – increasing and spreading to a large number of countries. Such a continuous process of resource exploitation and consequent environmental degradation has now brought about a situation where nature itself is in danger. Environmental degradation simply means lowering of environmental qualities because of adverse changes brought in by human activities in the basic structure of the components of the environment to such an extent that these adverse changes adversely affect all biological communities in general and human in particular. Thus, in view of the above, the cultural bindings of the population under study are inevitable for conceptualization of the problem identified.

ENVIRONMENTALISM AND GLOBALIZATION

It is it agreed among scholars that environmentalism can, in theory, be identified as a shared (and common) cultural perspective, despite the existence of cultural differences between societies. Therefore, in turning the attention to the globalization of environmentalism issues such as the place-boundedness of environmentalism and its homogenization or indigenization on a global scale need to be addressed. Linked to the issue of particularism-universalism is the geo-physically determined relativism of environmental problems. Global phenomena have different impacts in different parts of the world - this being dependent on geo-physical and (as discussed above) on economic (wealth) characteristics. This means, according to Cheru & Obi (2011, p. 79) that "calls for united, global responses can be seen as misleading and tendentious". The global emphasis on environmental problems also implies that there is more in common than there actually is. Therefore, if all environmental problems differ because of their unique geographical location and effects (not to mention the established social perception of them), then can there be such a thing as global environmentalism? In other words, I will here strive to create a synthesis of the issues discussed above.

The stance that part of one's understanding of the world, of one's culture, stems from direct perception of our experience (Okoi & Tabi 2011). This will allow for the understanding that environmental sentiment is not purely a product of one's social context. Therefore, whilst

environmental issues are by their very nature connected to the local geophysical environment (that is, an environment that is 'place-bound'), two facts speak against an environmentally relativistic refutation of the idea of a shared, common global environmentalism (Eyo & Ojong 2008). Firstly, individual reflection, direct perception and experience - combined with communication technologies and information systems- allow us to consider the similarities between our local environmental problems and those suffered by others (Eba 2020). This naturally assumes that a person on the other side of the globe is worthy of concern; that she is a moral object, i.e. that a 'global sense of humanity' exists. Secondly, the realization of the interconnectedness of the global environment- or, indeed, the identification of the globe with the wider environment- leads to the conclusion that local environmental problems often have wider regional, or global causes (be they socio-economic or direct bio-physical). And, conversely, that local action has wider consequences - analogy to the ubiquitous 'butterfly effect, from physics and chaos theory will be appropriate for this. Thus, again, the nations of a global humanity and a global environment are paramount in refuting the idea that a locally determined geo-physical relativism would cancel out any sense of globalized environmentalist thought.

The message of protecting the environment will be understood in different ways in different societies. However, neither cultural relativism, nor the belief that globalization automatically incurs homogenization of culture are valid arguments on their Own. Instead, the process should be seen as an interaction between the strong forces of globalization and the (probably) equally strong forces of localism. Environmentalist ideas are adapted and modified according to the society and environment into which they are imported. However, it is possible to reason that certain core 'messages' of environmentalism- such as global humanity and global environment - will (with globalizing cultural, social, political and economic influences) 'percolate' into other (territorial) cultures and influence environmental concern globally. The development of environmentalist views is just that - a development where constant change takes place as views influence each other. Another issue that warrants discussion is whether 'global environmentalism' will mean that only 'cosmopolitans' by profession, i.e. those professionally involved in these issues such as activists of international NGOs, politicians and academics, are those influenced by global environmentalist sentiment? Cosmopolitans can be seen as 'bridgeheads' of global cultural perspectives into territorial cultures (Hannerz 1990; Ogar 2008; Ogar et al., 2018), meaning that they aid in propagating environmental concern and shaping attitudes. However, the influence of modern media should also be taken into account. It could, as Hannerz (1990), indicates, be possible to become a cosmopolitan without ever leaving one's own borne, when images of environmental events and problems are conveyed to one's borne via electronic, as well as non-electronic media. Through the influence of media, the notion of a compressing globe - and therefore also the realization of a (single) global environment and of a global humanity- became very tangible (albeit 'two-dimensional') notions. This indicates that genuine (global) concern for the environment is not limited to certain (professional or occupational) categories of people who travel and interact face to-face with people in societies globally, but that it can be, and increasingly is, held by 'ordinary people' as well.

IS GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC POSSIBLE

Organisations and institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank function at a global level. They operate as part of the United Nations (UN) system, either as specialised agencies or autonomous organisations (with the exception of the WTO which is an independent body with “special UN cooperation arrangements”). The United Nations is the umbrella beneath which international cooperation takes place and internationally-binding agreements and regulations are made. Some of these international agreements include the Kyoto Protocol, Agenda 21, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Important for my purposes is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted in 1948. This is the central document of over fifty declarations and conventions of international and regional application to human rights. Although it is based upon Western political ideas, it is the first statement of its kind to confirm human dignity, and to outline basic rights and freedoms. Under this declaration, the rights of the individual take precedence over the interests of the nation. In this way, every individual’s rights are of importance regardless of their geographical or political status. It is not legally binding; therefore the principles take the form of recommendations rather than requirements. Because not all UN member states have unified views on human rights issues, not all have ratified the declaration. Although it is not in itself legally binding, the international community has encouraged voluntary compliance and the UN Commission on Human Rights monitors and reports on human rights situations in various countries and investigates whether those countries are living up to international standards. If it finds that they are not, even the drawing of attention to violations can bring great political pressure to bear. It can work, and national policies can change as a result, for example; the apartheid regime in South Africa. The fight against apartheid was, according to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, “one that rallied people and Governments behind a common objective: the objective of reaffirming the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms of all peoples” (Moore 2003, p. 43). Crucially it acts as a tool for recourse. If it is deemed that a nation state is in gross violation of agreed international standards of human rights, then action can be taken. It may be action in the form of political pressure, economic and/or political sanctions, or even intervention by UN agencies.

It can of course be argued that, like most UN mechanisms, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) has not been entirely successful; after all it does seem that member states tend to take the bits they like, and reject those that do not further their interests. The United States of America, for example, has refused to sign the Kyoto Protocol – the only international agreement on climate change. At the Earth Summit – UNCED – in Rio George W Bush stated that the lifestyle of the US would not be up for discussion. The American administration also assert that US citizens would not be subject to trial in an International Criminal Court. This element of voluntariness would seem to defeat the object, if the object is to promote and encourage *universal* adherence to democratically and mutually agreed principles. There are flaws with the UN system as it stands, particularly with regard to enforcement. Much has been written, discussed and proposed on the subject of UN reform, and I will touch upon some of the key issues in respect of global governance in Part IV.

There is also a debate over whether universal principles should be adopted without question. It has been argued that the UNDRH is based on particularly Western political ideas and Western concepts of individual rights. This is a valid point if it is compared to the prevailing ideologies of countries such as China where the functioning of the collective is valued above that of the individual. When the former US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, defended human rights as the universal moral language at the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, he was heavily criticised. He defended his claim with the argument that “cultural relativism” had become “the last refuge of repression”, and that cultural

traditions could not be regarded as ethical systems. One of his critics, American communitarian philosopher Deane Curtin, sees views such as Christopher's as a form of systemic violence (Epp & Watkinson 1997). Christopher was expressing the view that appeal to cultural tradition can be used to excuse all manner of repressive, oppressive, and even violent, practices (Eyo & Essien 2017). For Curtin, on the other hand, to *deny* these cultural practices is a form of violence.

Problems with enforcement and philosophical debates notwithstanding, I want to argue that the very existence of the UNHDR serves to establish that global ethics is possible. The UNDHR sets a precedent in that it demonstrates the way in which international agreement can be reached on fundamental issues. This in turn shows that, although being part of distinct and disparate cultures, human beings globally can share common broad-based values. That is not to say there will not always be cultural difference and variation overlaying these values, but fundamentally there can be basic concurrence. If there can be this concurrence on human rights then perhaps the same could apply within the context of environmental principles applied universally.

HOW CAN THIS APPLY TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

After the Second World War, in the 1940s and 1950s, human rights issues were on the top of the international political agenda. The ensuing discussions resulted in an international declaration and broad agreement. In the same way, in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, environmental issues are at the forefront of international discussion. Although potentially controversial - as was the UNDHR - it could be that a similar broad agreement could be born of current environmental discourse. Environmental philosopher J Baird Callicott argues that some form of common environmental values already exists within differing cultures and religious traditions. In *Earth's Insights*, Callicott provides an account of environmental values as seen from a variety of global religions and cultures. Of his work he says,

“[My] principle purpose is to audit the fund of ecological ideas on which the world's various peoples may draw as we face a common and unprecedented global environmental crisis” (Callenbach et al., 1993, p. 45).

It is not necessary here to reproduce Callicott's work or to detail how each tradition regards the natural world. Suffice it to say that he finds evidence - perhaps in varying degrees and for differing reasons - of consideration and respect for nature in each of the traditions he studied. These traditions include the major religions as well as spiritual practices/systems less known in the West such as West Polynesian Paganism, South American Eco-Eroticism and Australian Aboriginal Dreamtime. Through looking at this variety of traditions, Callicott believes that we can derive hope from the possibility that there is “an ancient tie to nature in our human consciousness that simply needs to be rediscovered, reawakened and restored” (Callicott, 1994, p. XXI). He speaks of “..an intellectually diverse global network of indigenous environmental ethics, each adapted to its cultural and ecological bioregion” (Callicott, 1994, XVI). He then invites others to join the effort to create this network and acknowledges the plurality of environmental attitudes and values. Although acknowledging this plurality, his aim is to show that differing values can be mutually reinforcing, not necessarily contradictory and divisive. Callicott is appealing to the spiritual nature of humankind and is hopeful that through some form of spiritual reawakening or recognition we will reconnect with nature and

thus increase our environmental awareness. The point is that Callicott shows that certain values can underpin all of human life. Although I am starting from a different point - being concerned with more basic, physical human needs as the foundation of an environmental ethic - this is what I also aim to show.

The debate here is not over the possibility of a global environmental ethic, but its desirability. The question is not *can* we have a global environmental ethic - I have shown that in many ways we already do - but *should* we have one? This question evokes numerous questions and debates that are interesting to consider from an environmental philosophical perspective.

WHAT FUTURE FOR A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC?

Whereas human rights were the central global concern and a matter of UN policy discussion in the postcolonising world of the 1940s and 1950s, it may be argued that today's urgent concern requiring international cooperation is the global ecological crisis. Although there have been many examples of cooperation within the UN and within global civil society, there is as of yet no UN Declaration of environmental principles. As mentioned in the Introduction, The Earth Charter (which failed to achieve the endorsement of the UN General Assembly at the 2002 Earth Summit in Johannesburg) is the only attempt to codify a global environmental ethic. I argue that it is evidence that defining principles can result from cross-cultural conversation and negotiation. It is for this reason that it is interesting to examine it in light of the foregoing discussion. In particular, the following questions should be asked of the EC: how far does it succeed as a workable environmental ethic, and what does it offer?

HOW FAR DOES THE EARTH CHARTER SUCCEED AS A WORKABLE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC?

The Earth Charter is the only internationally recognised document attempting to respond to global problem(s) with a set of basic ethical principles. As it stands, it is not legally enforceable, but it does codify - or at least declare an ethical stance towards the environmental concerns, issues and problems we face, and proposes ways in which these can be addressed. It perhaps provides a framework for a workable - that is, a potentially enforceable - global environmental ethic.

i) The aims of the Earth Charter

What exactly is the Earth Charter and what are its origins? To answer this question I shall draw on the brief history outlined on the Earth Charter website as well as on Ramachandra Guha's account (Bosselmann 2004). In 1987 the United Nations issued a report on sustainable development called, "Our Common Future", written by a transnational committee chaired by the Norwegian Prime Minister Go Harlem Brundtland. The aim of the report was to bring about international cooperation in the environmental field. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) followed, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. 180 countries participated in what became known as the "Earth Summit" which rendered it the largest international conference ever held. Following the Earth Summit the UNCED called for the creation of a new charter that would set forth fundamental principles for sustainable development. The Earth Charter was officially launched at the Peace

Palace in The Hague on June 29th 2000. The aims and vision of the Earth Charter and the Earth Charter Initiative are to establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace (Edor 2005; Eyo & Ojong 2008). The vision is one of universal responsibility, of identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. The Charter states that we must realise that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about *being* more, not *having* more (my emphasis). The preamble to the Earth Charter reads:

“We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations” (Coleman & Ryan 2005, p. 91).

ii) What does the Earth Charter offer?

The Earth Charter’s vision of universal responsibility is highly compatible with my view on the way forward as it is with the views of Attfield and Singer. The Charter acknowledges that although comprising local communities, the Earth is also one whole community. This is what I have been suggesting throughout: that we recognise local communities but need an overarching global ethic because we are all part of the global community. It talks of citizens of different nations and of one world and of everyone sharing responsibility. This echoes the cosmopolitan position, defended by Attfield and which I endorse.

“We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community...a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organisations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed” (Attfield & Belsey 1994, p. 64).

The Earth Charter clearly calls for a global environmental ethic in much the same way that I do. From the quotation above, it is evident that the vision is one of an international declaration or code similar to the UNDHR, which is as I suggest it could be envisaged. When it also states that we must realise that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more, the Charter seems to be supporting what Sen and Nussbaum propound. That is that human freedoms, needs and capabilities are met first and foremost – the focus being upon functioning and flourishing rather than owning and consuming. The Earth Charter certainly serves as a model, and, given that it was the product of delegates from 180 countries, provides evidence that people can reach agreement across cultures. This is a positive move in the right direction. Although the Charter as it stands is not legally binding, and so lacks teeth, it does offer a sound basis for continuing discourse and debate.

A feature of the Earth Charter worth noting is its affirmation of the positive, as opposed to concentration on denial and restraints. It would be a good move for the environmental movement to promote positive enticements to change behaviour rather than to issue warnings or threaten retroactive punishments in order to constrain action. For example, the assertion of the right to clean air would be a more positive approach than the command to “cut emissions”. This is a welcome shift in emphasis and one which may prove to generate a more positive and productive response from the global community. This is not the place to examine the psychology and relative merits of discipline and punishment versus reward and positive outcomes, but the latter would seem to be the more optimistic and effective approach. So, these principles have been stated and (by some) applauded, but are we prepared to give up freedom(s)? A reading of the Earth Charter will quickly show that some (mainly in the West) will have to sacrifice a certain amount in order to adhere to the principles. I have been predicting - and defending - this necessity throughout this paper. It is indeed the only logical way forward, and it is a view supported by Ophuls and Singer among others. Some of our freedoms may be curtailed under such a Charter, declaration, or ethic, but equally restricted will be discrimination, imperialism, colonisation, oppression. So we may be less free to destroy rainforest, or pollute the atmosphere, but we will also be less free to abuse others and impose our will.

FROM ETHIC TO LAW

Having discussed the theory of a global environmental ethic, the next question is how such an ethic could be put into practice. It has been my task to convince of the desirability of a global ethic, rather than to detail how it can be implemented, but it is worth mentioning some of the proposals that have been put forward. There is currently much discourse on possible ways forward, ways to implement environmental ethics globally. The United Nations’ Commission on Global Governance, for example, has produced a lengthy document which makes recommendations proposing the expansion of UN authority in various areas, including UN authority over the global commons (Ranganathan 2016). The Commission believes that, given “global awareness of impending environmental catastrophe...the people of the world will recognise the need for, and the benefits of, global governance” (Falk 2013, p. 65). The report is quick to emphasise that global governance is not the same as world government, or world federalism. It is perhaps difficult to discern the distinction here, especially as there is no historic model for the system proposed. In accord with the thesis of this paper, the Commission’s report states,

“The foundation for global governance is the belief that the world is now ready to accept a “global civic ethic” based on “a set of core values that can unite people of all cultural, political, religious, or philosophical backgrounds.” This belief is reinforced by another belief: that governance should be underpinned by democracy at all levels and ultimately by the rule of enforceable law” (Ho 2008, p. 458).

George Monbiot (2016) proposes a set of alternative institutions to govern and regulate global trade and global politics, including a world parliament. His world parliament would not be a legislative body (at least, not initially) but would hold global players to account. He outlines a new constitution for global governance calling for democracy at a global level and claiming to offer a possible blueprint for a “new world order”. It seems that many of those concerned with the neo-liberal, capitalist, environmentally destructive status quo understand and realise the need for more active, and perhaps coercive, governance, and that governance needs to be at a global level. Some might say that most attempts at universalising principle(s) have failed. Examples could include the UN Security Council (nations adhering when it suits and not when it doesn’t), International Criminal Court (US saying that Americans will

not be tried there), Kyoto Protocol (again, the US refusing to sign). However a precedent has already been set by the UN Declaration on Human Rights and it is an example of how such a declaration/treaty can work on a global scale. The United Nations has gradually expanded human rights law to encompass particular standards for vulnerable groups who now possess rights protecting them from discriminatory practices. General Assembly decisions have gradually established the universality of human rights, demonstrating their interrelatedness with development and democracy. The United Nations mechanisms monitoring compliance with human rights covenants have gained cohesiveness and weight among Member States. I argue that if this can work then there is hope for a global environmental ethic.

CONCLUSION

Often, the focus of those around the global negotiating table is on their own national interests and as long as this is the case it is hard to see how any international agreement can be reached in any significant way. Again in the case of the US – Kyoto Protocol – America won't sign because, as a huge consumer of oil and thus a huge producer of CO₂, it is patently not in its interest to limit its use. This is short-sighted in the extreme, but until this narrow, nation-centred outlook is addressed and overcome, there can be no global environmental ethic. Unfortunately it is not within the scope of this paper to answer just how this can be achieved practically, only to consider a possible, ethical way forward. I propose a global ethic which would be universal and apply to all. It would enable and ensure sustainability, focussing on human freedoms, capabilities and flourishing. Damaging activities and negative freedoms would be restricted. At the same time, individual cultures and traditions would be recognised: the over-arching concern being respect for human life, and for non-human life as that which sustains us. There does need to be some form of global governance regarding environmental ethic and enforcement thereof. This is not just limited to environmentalism: economics, politics, technology, culture, are all tied up together and need to be considered all as part of the whole.

This ethic could run along similar lines to the UN Declaration of Human Rights in that it can be appealed to, not necessarily universally enforced law in itself, but a tool to be used where individuals or nations feel the need to appeal against environmental (or indeed any other) injustice. This could be said to be too weak. The question then arises of how to ensure that member states (ideally all states) adhere to principles: it would have to be enforceable in some way. Therefore the freedom of states, nations and individuals will necessarily be curtailed. The "right" freedoms will be upheld and maintained while the damaging will not. Is this eco-fascism? Well, no. Not if we look at the underlying principles of the UN as they stand, and consider that, generally, the aims of the UNDHR are not deemed fascist or totalitarian. And if we consider just the basic duties and responsibilities that we, as citizens of the world are (or should be) bound by, then it would seem that "imposing" or living by such broad principles should be acceptable by all. It will, after all, be ultimately essential for all.

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