

Dakar Call for action

For the adoption of a Global Pact for the Environment

1. In 2015, the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agreement created new global momentum for environmental protection. These texts represented major progress. However, environmental damage persists and is particularly serious. The years 2016 and 2017 saw record-breaking temperatures. Biodiversity continues to decline rapidly.
2. Developing countries are the first to be affected by the effects of environmental degradation. Africa is threatened by coastal erosion, air and water pollution, drought and deforestation. These threats expose people to famine and poverty. They push people into exile and lead to deadly conflicts. Africa could lose more than half of its bird and mammal species by 2050. To deal with this situation, the international community must urgently strengthen its action. Intragenerational and intergenerational equity, solidarity and justice will be essential to address environmental deterioration and its consequences.
3. The Earth forms one ecosystem in which everything is connected. Climate change affects biodiversity; deforestation has an impact on air pollution; agricultural practices influence soil degradation. More broadly, humanity has an interdependent relationship with nature. It is part of a complex system from which it cannot isolate itself. This is why the ecological crisis requires a systemic and global response. In a context of increasing numbers of technical and specialized environmental rules, we now need a general text laying down the fundamental principles the world must respect to strengthen the protection of the environment.
4. This is the aim of the draft Global Pact for the Environment. The basic principles concerning the environment have been enshrined in various texts, such as the 1982 World Charter for Nature and the 1992 Rio Declaration. However, these texts are not currently legally binding. The principles are well-known: the right to a healthy environment, the duty to take care of nature, prevention, precaution, remediation of environmental damage, public information participation. There is a broad consensus on these principles. This is why, for over thirty years, the international community of jurists has been calling on States to enshrine these principles in a binding treaty, so as to inspire the action of national lawmakers and judges in each State.

5. After the two International Covenants adopted by the United Nations in 1966, one relating to civil and political rights and the other to economic, social and cultural rights, we call for the adoption of a third Covenant, enshrining a third generation of fundamental commitments: the rights and duties of citizens and governments relating to the protection of the environment. This Pact would be the first global environmental treaty.
6. Considering it is now urgent to take action, we call:
 - upon States to embark on the negotiation and then adoption of a Global Pact for the Environment;
 - upon all non-State actors, local government bodies, companies, civil society, non-governmental organisations, universities and citizens to fully play their role in the fight against environmental degradation.

Dakar, 4 May 2018