

A Fair Earth Share is a Human Right for present and future generations

Give everyone structural rights and room to thrive

Amsterdam / Glasgow, December 2020

Although in the last 40 years, the wellbeing of many people has increased, and some have seen an extreme rise in their income, the living standards for many others not only have not improved but in some cases have even deteriorated. The time for a new approach is now!

According to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to 'a decent standard of living, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and social services' (article 25). However, until now, there is no practical reference as to how this right can be realized. Would a new approach create new possibilities?

A new approach

The UN Declaration protects everyone's right to life, which is enshrined as well in regional human rights law (such as the European Convention on Human Rights). This right to life translates into a human right of access to the Earth's natural resources and environmental qualities for all.

Given the inherent limits of the Earth systems to provide sustainably and safely those resources to current and future generations, it is crucial to consider how a human right to a fair Earth share could be translated in quantitative terms and recorded in an internationally agreed human rights language.

Quantifying the available ecospace

The Doughnut-model (2017) by Kate Raworth describes the space for sustainable and fair development for humanity, with the safe ecospace as a ceiling and the fair sharing of the social benefits of development as a floor. This space is to be calculated so as to leave a fair amount of resources for future generations.

The model of the global Ecological Footprint (1996) allows us to make quantitative scientific comparisons of present aggregate claims on global ecospace between continents, countries, cities, and persons. Through the concept of 'Safe Planetary Boundaries' (2009), the available safe ecospace can be calculated.

Following these methodologies, we can take the next step towards fair global sharing. We hope the right to a fair Earth share can be recorded in internationally agreed human rights law.

An Advisory Opinion

For this process to start, we seek from UN member countries to make a request to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for an "Advisory Opinion" on this subject by the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The request should preferably be made by a combination of two or more high-income and low-income countries.

A Fair Earth Share is a Human Right for present and future generations

When the International Court of Justice starts an "Advisory Opinion" with the proposition that "A Fair Earth Share is a Human Right" all member countries of the UN are invited to give their reaction. Based on all reactions, the official 'Opinion' will be formulated.

Our request to you

We would like to ask your support for this new approach, and to take the initiative, with one or more members of the Wellbeing Economy Governments, to make this request for an Advisory Opinion an item on the agenda of the UNGA. Should you have any questions, please find our addresses below as we would be happy to provide further clarification.

The Dutch Platform Fair and Green Economy (since 2006 – www.platformDSE.org)

Contact address: Gerrit Stegehuis, secretary Platform Fair and Green Economy, The Netherlands - gerrit.steghuis@platformdse.org

More information:

The Platform Fair and Green Economy is a member of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance.

A more detailed 'two-pager' of the present status of this project can be found here:

https://platformdse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/XIII-Towards-Footprint-Justice_.docx

A recent supportive statement for Footprint Justice by the leading scientists Hans Opschoor, Jan Pronk and Nico Schrijver from the Netherlands can be found here: <https://platformdse.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Supporting-statement-for-Advisory-Opinion-Sept.-2020-.pdf>

An essay about Footprint Justice by Jan Juffermans was published by Resilience in June 2020, see: <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-06-04/towards-footprint-justice-a-fair-earth-share-is-a-human-right/>

Original references:

Opschoor J.B. (1995). "Ecospace and the Fall and Rise of Throughput Intensity", *Ecological Economics* Vol. 15 (1995) No. 2: 137-141.

Raworth, K. 2017. Why it's time for Doughnut Economics, *IPPR Progressive Review*, Vol. 24, issue 2:216-222.

Rockström, J. et al 2009. *A safe operating space for humanity*. Nature 461, 472-475.

Wackernagel, M. and W. Rees, 1996. *Our ecological footprint: reducing human impact on the Earth*. New Society Publ., Philadelphia. See also: <https://www.footprintnetwork.org>