

The Buenos Aires Draft Declaration on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change

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Whereas, although there is a large and growing scientific and economic literature on climate change, there is insufficient reflection on the ethical dimensions of many climate change issues;

Whereas, this insufficient reflection is surprising and alarming given that climate change policies raise profound ethical issues concerning, *e.g.*, which humans, societies, communities, plants, animals, and ecosystems will survive and which persons and countries will bear the burden of climate change;

Whereas, reflection on the ethical dimensions of climate change policy-making is urgent because:

- a. Unless the ethical dimensions are considered, the international community may choose responses that are ethically unsupportable or unjust;
- b. Many profound ethical questions are hidden in scientific and economic arguments about various climate change policy proposals;
- c. An equitable approach to climate change policy is necessary to overcome barriers currently blocking progress in international negotiations;
- d. An ethically based global consensus on climate change may prevent further disparities between rich and poor, and reduce potential international tension that will arise from climate-caused food and water scarcities and perceived inequitable use of the global atmospheric commons as a carbon sink;

Whereas, human activities in one part of the world that generate greenhouse gases are threatening humans, plants, animals, and ecosystems in other parts of the world, all people should acknowledge and act on their common but differentiated responsibilities to prevent harm from climate change and to bear their fair share of responsibility for damages and the steps that need to be taken to protect against foreseeable damages;

Whereas current approaches to climate change by some countries are ethically unsupportable;

Whereas, for some climate change issues existing principles of international law, if followed, should be sufficient to provide an adequate normative basis for policy formation, yet for other issues new ethically-based international norms will need to be discussed and adopted;

Whereas, without sufficient ethical guidance, national climate change policies can lead to economic development activities inconsistent with established norms of sustainable development;

Whereas, current approaches to climate change by some countries are often inconsistent with numerous international agreements that establish universal human rights and responsibilities;

Therefore, we conclude that:

1. Further and more detailed ethical reflection on the ethical issues entailed by specific climate change questions and positions is an international imperative.
2. This ethical reflection must seek to include the views and participation of people, organizations, and governments around the world, especially those from developing countries and those who are most vulnerable to climate change.
3. Some of the most important ethical issues entailed by climate change include:
 1. Who is ethically responsible for the consequences of climate change, that is, who is liable for the burdens of:
 - a. preparing for and then responding to climate change (i.e. adaptation)
 - b. unavoided damages?
 2. What ethical principles should guide the choice of specific climate change policy objectives including but not limited to maximum human-induced warming, and atmospheric greenhouse gas targets?
 3. What ethical principles should be followed in allocating responsibility among people, organizations, and governments at all levels to prevent ethically intolerable impacts from climate change?
 4. What principles of procedural justice should be followed to assure fair representation at all levels in decision-making about climate change?
 5. Are commonly used reasons for delaying climate change action ethically justified? These reasons include
 - a. Scientific uncertainty
 - b. Costs to national economies.
 - c. The absence of developing nations' emissions reduction targets
 - d. The future invention of less-costly technologies.

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