

Proposal - Anthropocene Amendment to Article 16

Proposed addition to the declaration of human rights

Human Rights is at the core of our modern culture. When they were drawn up the 'Rights of Wildlife' were not taken into consideration. As the [sixth mass extinction of wildlife](#) accelerates, we need to rethink. A public debate and formal recognition of this oversight is urgently needed for us to survive the Anthropocene. All voices need to be heard. This is not an issue for experts alone, our collective future is in the balance. Loss of bio-diversity is likely to cause our own extinction. It is proposed that the following wording is added to Article 16 within the Declaration of Human Rights:

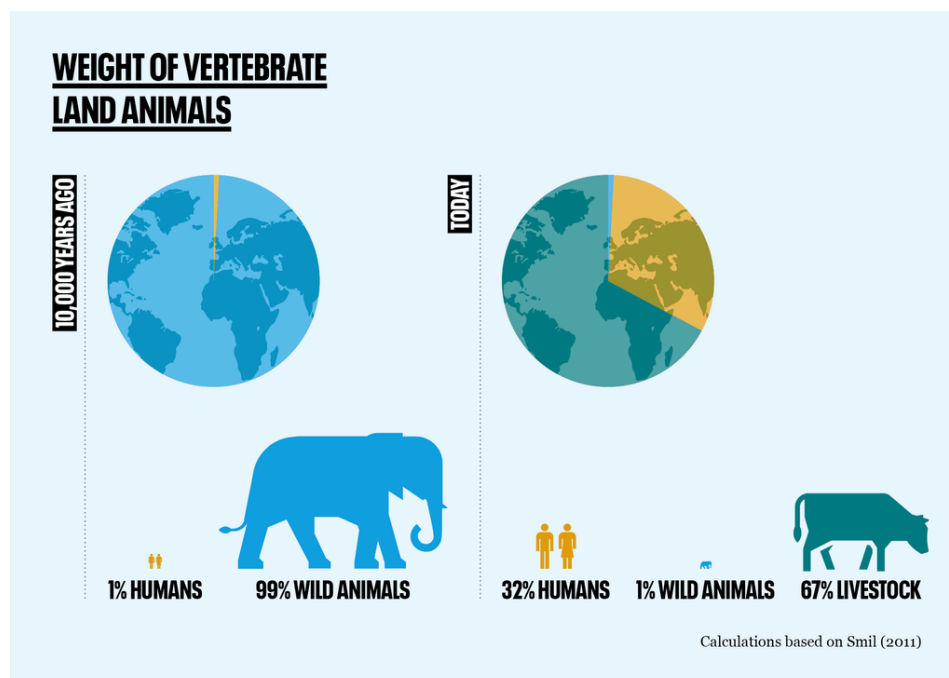
In recognition that we are now in the age of the Anthropocene, couples that choose to found a family should aspire to live in a sustainable life-style. This requires an awareness that the growing human population is the key driver in climate change and environmental damage. It involves sharing that knowledge with people of childbearing age, and their partners, and it involves taking that into consideration when planning the size of one's own family.

The Anthropocene

We urgently need to publicly recognise the role of Human Population in Climate Change. For a detailed briefing regarding the Anthropocene please refer to this online briefing [document](#).

In the early 21st century, we are adding an extra billion people to the global population every 12 to 15 years. The UN's median population projection foresees no peak in our growth until the 22nd century, at more than 11 billion people (approximately 50% more than today), unless positive action is taken to manage that growth. The scale of humanity's presence and effect can be strikingly illustrated by the transition from a world in which wild animals composed the vast majority of the weight of mammals on the land (known as biomass) to one in which they have almost disappeared in statistical terms. When the biomass of domesticated animals is included, based on the best available estimates for 10,000 years ago, wild mammals have gone from being 99% of terrestrial mammal biomass to a little over 1%.

Clearly, such numerical transformations are key – and indeed fundamental – factors in driving the negative impacts witnessed on a global scale during the Anthropocene.



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The Cultural Causes of Climate change

How did *Homo sapiens* get itself into the position it is in today? How is it that we are about to be annihilated despite our great intelligence? An elegantly expressed equation arrived at in 1971-2 by Ehrlich and Holdren describes the relation between human population and environmental impact. At the time the potential for technology to debilitate our reasoning was not suggested. Technology has since proliferated fictional material, might this have fuelled an unrealistic outlook or expectations?

Environmental Impact = P x A x T

- A is Affluence – i.e. material consumption and the concomitant “effluence” of pollutants such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), per person.
- T is Technology impact per person – in which, for example fossil fuels measure more highly than solar based energy but we need to recognise that both have a CO₂ overhead.
- P is population – number of people

Currently global population is growing at around 1%, and global consumption at 3% per annum. The global population is already ecologically bankrupt, since we are consuming renewables such as forests and quality-soil faster than the time that they need to regenerate. We urgently need to put on the brakes. We have no mass carbon-sequestration methods in place to counteract the steady rise in our CO₂ production. We are already dangerously past the tipping points in Arctic Ice, according to latest models the arctic is likely to be ice-free by 2034. Ref [US National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration](#).

Technology

Technology will not solve the climate crisis. It tends to facilitate the acceleration in our rate of consumption. Furthermore our imagination combined with technology allows us to indulge in vast volumes of data, thereby reducing our ability to grasp truth at the macro level.

The Industrial revolution and the Technological revolution that followed soon after, combined to enable many of us to disengage completely from the challenges of survival in the natural world. Apart from those working in agriculture, many of the population do not realise the importance of reliable weather patterns and rich bio-diversity to feed ourselves.

Electronic entertainment works as an anaesthetic, it disconnects us from reality and desensitises us to the damage that we are inflicting. Most of us who live in the modern world of technology are unaware of how depleted wildlife and insect-life has become. The film industry has fuelled our appetite for story-telling to the extent that we prefer a politician who can tell a story with a happy-ending to one who will tell the truth. Also the desire to entertain has polluted the News industry.

The media are guilty of wasting column inches on minor news rather than macro events. The mounting evidence of unfolding climate breakdown and environmental damage are not given the column inches that would be in proportion to their significance with regard to the threat that they pose to survival. With regard to science information, for decades climate deniers have been given undeserved representation, thereby softening the presentation of frightening scientific fact.

Our natural emotional toolkit has been weakened by our reliance on stories with happy-endings, resulting in unrealistic expectations. Consequently emotions: fear, anger, guilt get triggered by petty issues, as they do in childhood. Emotions are an important toolkit in the climate crisis, but at the moment the majority of the public are not sufficiently engaged or aware, for these emotions to be triggered with regard to the very real dangers ahead. Without this engagement, we will not feel the fear that will be needed to drive the helpful life-style choices that will ensure survival.

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With regard to Affluence and Population, unless we acknowledge the need for rapid degrowth on both these fronts, then it is highly likely that we shall fail to survive the Anthropocene.

Affluence

Affluence - Degrowth is needed in all the non-essential indulgences which have significant carbon-footprint. In affluent countries, people can financially afford products, but the manufacture of them impacts negatively on the environment. People in the modern affluent world need to understand that when they take an air-flight to see their family on the other side of the world, those CO2 emissions are incrementally damaging the chances of survival for the next generation. Likewise taking the family on a plane for their summer holiday. Having a pet has a significant carbon-footprint. These are all painful truths that need to be faced, so that affluent people can make well-informed choices about how they live our lives. At the moment affluent societies are leading lives that are cumulatively damaging the chances of survival for the next generation. The UK will need to lead the way because of their presidency role at COP26.

Population

Population – Degrowth is urgently needed. We need to ensure that free contraception is readily available throughout the world. The global population needs to know how dangerous the future is looking. Anyone considering adding to their family should be advised to wait at least five years, to see whether the global community will act in time to avert the horrors that will undoubtedly unfold otherwise. The proposed amendment to the Declaration of Human Rights would go a long way to raise awareness throughout the world.

The UK urgently needs to lead by example in this respect, otherwise they will not be a credible president for negotiations in advance of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26 now scheduled for November 2021). The delayed date gives them time to demonstrate how public opinion can be changed, and can serve to avert the worst conclusion. If they take action in this way, they will be in a stronger position as president of negotiations to ask other countries to do the same.

Changing Public Awareness

If the human-race is to survive this century then a reality-check is needed. We need to overcome the appetite, in the affluent world especially, for flamboyance and happy-endings. We need to rise to the challenge of facing the stark realities. The COVID crisis has served as a helpful model. Some governments and media worked well together to ensure that the public understood in detail the dangers, and the ways to minimise risk. Now that the peak of the crisis appears to be over, in some countries media and government have reverted to the old ways of pettiness, blame and shame. In democratic countries formation of an emergency cross-party government will help. By doing this, all parties can share the blame or the credit for the outcomes. Hopefully this will enable all politicians to move away from the need to only take decisions that will enable them to be re-elected. Having taken this step they will need to present to the public the stark truth of the emergency that we are facing, and ask for maximum co-operation, as they did in the COVID crisis.

They need to announce that they are publicly setting the objective to reduce birth-rate to well below replacement levels. This target to be achieved by voluntary use of contraceptive methods by the citizens of child-bearing age. This plea for assistance from the public, will bring home the truth of the gravity of the climate change and our increasing population pressure issues. A successful awareness campaign should have significant effect within one year. Thus curbing the growth in the building industry and relieving the pressure on the transport systems, and resulting in significant CO2 reductions all round.

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Collective Responsibility

Asking who is to blame will not help us. We need to embrace collective responsibility both for our past and for our future.

Risk Management

It is a great irony that our modern world is obsessed with health and safety and saving each individual with the maximum medical care. In most countries there is no 'Help to Die' policy like they have in Holland or Switzerland, so some people are kept alive when they would prefer to be assisted with their death. Yet while we are pre-occupied with the survival of individuals, we are placidly continuing to damage the chances of the majority of the human race to survive, and much of the rest of life on earth from surviving. A risk manager who identifies a very severe danger that is definitely going to happen would normally throw every possible solution at it, in the hope of survival. We must ask ourselves, why are we not doing this?

We are trapped in the box of 'Business As Usual'. Unless we rapidly begin to think outside the box, our chances of survival will disappear, because climate and environmental tipping points are rapidly being passed. The most recent models from the US National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration predict that there will be [no ice in the Arctic by 2034](#). Which means that a child born today will still be at school when the albedo effect reaches maximum intensity.

Some relevant observations from visionary thinkers

Mark Twain: *"Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear"*

Nelson Mandela: *"It always seems impossible until it's done"*

With the ongoing COVID crisis this quote from Arundhati Roy is particularly relevant at the moment: *"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it".*