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WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS INITIATIVE

Draft Proposal: December 29, 1993

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hope for restoring the planet to health and for adopting a sustainable course of economic and social development rests, finally, on the ability and willingness of the world's citizens to act as intelligent and self-conscious moral agents, exercising responsibility for local, regional, and global environments.

The World Environmental Ethics Initiative aims to facilitate such moral responsibility by sponsoring a global conversation on environmental ethics that will make measurable progress in the elaboration, practical application, and dissemination of a world ethic for living sustainably.

The Initiative seeks to achieve these objectives by developing the potential of the Ethics Working Group (EWG) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), which has effectively promoted multidisciplinary and cross-cultural work in environmental ethics since 1984. Chaired by J. Ronald Engel, Professor of Social Ethics at Meadville/Lombard Theological School and Lecturer at the University of Chicago, the EWG is an intercommissional working group within the Commission of Environmental Strategy and Planning of the World Conservation Union. It consists of an international voluntary network of experts in the fields of environmental ethics and related academic disciplines, natural resource policy and management, and environmental communication and advocacy. Its accomplishments include the consultative process that made an ethic of "care and respect for the community of life" the first principle of the new version of the world conservation strategy, *Caring for the Earth*, and pioneering publications in ethics of environment and development, and in religion and ecology.

In 1992, the Ethics Working Group was invited by the IUCN Council and Director General to expand its activities into an international program in ethics that would include a liaison officer in the IUCN Secretariat, and administrative offices in Chicago. Current EWG activities include advising the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law regarding its draft *International Covenant on Environment and Development*, and working with the IUCN Species Survival Commission to develop guidelines for the ethical uses of wild species.

The World Environmental Ethics Initiative will advance moral deliberation and cross-cultural consensus on the principles of a world ethic for living sustainably through dialogue, inquiry, communication, voluntary association, education, advocacy, and institutional collaboration. The first three year phase of the program will:

- increase the membership and organizational effectiveness of the EWG network
- establish three task forces—on the philosophy of a world ethic for living sustainably, on the ethics of the protection and use of wild animal and plant communities, and on ethics and environmental law

- pursue work on the development of an earth charter; on education in environmental ethics in diverse cultural and social settings, including theological schools; on the role of ethics in regional planning for sustainable development; and on an international code of conservation ethics
- develop capacities for communication and publication
- build financial, staff, and institutional support

The funding needed for the 1994-1996 period is \$_____.

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- 7 *Advancing Ethics for Living Sustainably: Report of the IUCN Ethics Workshop, April, 1993*
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THE CHALLENGE OF A WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIC

Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man, and to accord other organisms such recognition, man must be guided by a moral code of action.

WORLD CHARTER FOR NATURE, 1982

Human survival and well-being could depend on success in elevating sustainable development to a global ethic.

GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND, 1988

The future of humanity and of our fellow creatures is at stake. We human beings have become a danger to ourselves. We must act in time. And, we must now adopt a new planetary perspective. We need to understand our immense and recently acquired power to alter nature. Technological solutions are indispensable, but they alone are not enough. We must accept responsibility for adopting a spiritually wise, technologically sound, ethical and farsighted stewardship of the planet—and a renewed respect for Nature on which all life depends.

GLOBAL FORUM MOSCOW DECLARATION, 1990

We understand, therefore, that the salvation of the planet and of its present and future peoples demands the creation of a new civilization rooted in an ethic that establishes a basis for limits, prudence, care and respect for diversity, solidarity, justice and freedom.

RIO DE JANEIRO DECLARATION, A GLOBAL FORUM NGO TREATY, 1992

Winning support for the ethic for living sustainably will require action on a broad front. Since value systems determine how people pursue political, legal, economic or technological goals, values associated with the ethic must pervade all spheres of human action if it is to succeed.

CARING FOR THE EARTH, 1992

ARGUMENT

Many persons and groups throughout the world now believe that only a fundamental change in human consciousness—expressed in the form of a world environmental ethic, and embodied in a global covenant—will enable human civilization to enter the 21st century with prospects of achieving a sustainable and fulfilling relationship to the earth.

Compelling religious and moral reasons are being advanced in support of this belief:

- The **sacredness of life** obliges human beings to care for the whole of creation
- In an interdependent world human beings have **collective responsibility** for the welfare and evolution of the planet
- Global **moral determination** is required to marshal the resources necessary to meet the needs of communities threatened by extreme poverty and environmental deterioration
- Environmental issues are inseparable from issues of **human rights, equity, and security**, and require similar broad moral understandings and agreements for their resolution
- Biological and cultural diversity will survive only if the nations of the world create a **normative world order** that supports them

The second world conservation strategy, *Caring for the Earth*, argues that it is necessary to elaborate and win support for a world ethic for living sustainably because:

- Without it the human future is in jeopardy—poverty, strife and tragedy will increase
 - Individual actions are, perhaps for the first time, combining to have global effects, and since these worldwide problems arise from today's conflicting aspirations and competition for scarce resources, the ethical principles enabling us to resolve them must also be agreed globally
- No major society yet lives according to a value system that cares properly for the future of human communities and other life on earth

In summary, given the growing global interdependence of all peoples ecologically, economically, politically, and culturally, only the creation of a world community united by a faith in shared environmental attitudes and norms can ensure the mutual flourishing of human beings and planet earth.

The movement for a world environmental ethic

Interest in a world environmental ethic has grown rapidly in recent years. This is evident in the repeated calls for a global ethic by public leaders—such as Gro Harlem Brundtland, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Pope John Paul II, Vaclav Havel, and Wangari Maathai; in the international declarations, such as those cited above, that affirm the importance of universal ethical principles; in the intensity with which the need for a global ethic was discussed at the Earth Summit and Global Forum during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; and in the increasing number of scholarly papers and books devoted to the subject.

Groups and occupations formerly neglectful of environmental values have begun to recognize them. The most visible changes are in religious communities, evident in recent conferences, books, and action resources; and in the field of philosophy, where several journals, a substantial canon of literature, new courses of study, and an international society have emerged in a very short period. There is growing concern to include environmental ethics in law, medicine, education, economics, and business. Grass-roots advocacy groups, in poor as well as industrialized societies, are also increasingly self-conscious about environmental values.

The world conservation movement has also shown interest in environmental ethics, apparent in the publication of *Caring for the Earth* and in vigorous international debate on the moral adequacy of the concept of “sustainable development.” Local, national, and international alliances have formed between environmental organizations and religious communities—the Religion and Conservation Network of the Worldwide Fund for Nature is an example. Conservationists are looking to ethicists for help in limiting public demands on the planet’s resources, and for aid in resolving politically divisive issues such as those surrounding the protection, use, and captive breeding of wild species.

Yet, in spite of growing concern for environmental ethics, and indications of progress in certain quarters, the complex and demanding nature of the work required to articulate a world environmental ethic that can be supported by the diverse, often antagonistic, cultures of the globe has yet to be addressed.

Three major problems need to be addressed before a world environmental ethic can be an effective factor in the course of human affairs.

The problem of understanding ethics

One of the chief problems that stands in the way of the development of a world environmental ethic is the way ethics itself is conceived in the modern world.

Ethics (the ability to distinguish good and evil, right and wrong), and most especially environmental ethics (the ability to distinguish good and evil, right and wrong relationships to the natural world), are casualties of the great dichotomies of the age—the division between self and world, humanity and nature, values and facts, theory and practice, public and private, male and female. These dualisms eliminate the possibility of a middle ground between moral absolutism, on the one hand, and moral relativism, on the other. They also make “environmental ethics” a contradiction in terms, since in this scheme, nature has no claim to moral consideration.

The emergence of a world environmental ethic depends upon overcoming these dichotomies and appreciating that:

- values are not merely matters of subjective experience and private preference; they are amenable to public discussion, objective inquiry, and reasoned choice
- all environmental values, esthetic, spiritual, scientific, historical, cultural—not just economic and instrumental values—are candidates for public consideration and promotion
- issues of social ethics, of relationships between races, genders, rich and poor, are not separate from issues of environmental ethics
- moral knowledge is something ordinary people can expect to create and possess; it is not the province of experts
- ethics is an aspect of science, business, and politics as well as religion and philosophy
- moral truth is not a matter of absolutes vs. relatives, universals vs. particulars, but a matter of practical wisdom that grows with experience, knowledge, and practice
- moral thought and action are opportunities to exercise unique human capacities and to live a fulfilling life

As long as moral choice is conceived as purely private, subjective, theoretical, or absolute, neither concerned with, nor informed by, the many and varied relationships persons and groups have to nature and one another, citizens will fail to attend to their development as moral agents accountable for the well-being of the planet on which they dwell.

The intellectual challenges of a world environmental ethic

A second major problem has to do with the **meaning** of a world ethic. There are many intellectually challenging questions regarding the form, values, and practical implications of a world environmental ethic that must be resolved.

What form shall the ethic take?

Does it grow out of a new mythology or story of the universe? Does it require a set of commandments? An alternative way of life? Is it to be identified with the common "essence" of the moral teachings of the world's faiths? Or is it simply a consensus on desirable practical actions? Or all of these, and more? And how should the need for shared environmental values globally be reconciled with the need to develop a variety of environmental ethics firmly rooted in the diverse cultures and geographies of the world?

What are the basic principles, attitudes, or values of a world environmental ethic?

Should its primary orientation be human-centered, such as the *Rio Declaration*, or should it view each human being as a member of the community of life, with unique capacities and responsibilities for the welfare and future of the community, as proposed in *Caring for the Earth*? How should the ethic express the religious intuition that life is to be revered and humans should have compassion for all beings? How should the ethic reflect the modern scientific understanding of nature as an internally related, loosely integrated whole? What role should the idea of rights play in defining the moral claims of other species and organisms? How should the global struggle for social justice—for shared principles of human rights, economic equity, and democratic governance—relate to the struggle for shared principles of environmental stewardship?

How should these broad considerations be related to the practical needs of local communities and nations, and the often competing agendas of the world conservation movement?

What, for example, are the implications of a world environmental ethic for the resolution of controversies surrounding the protection and use of wild species, and how might moral inquiry and discussion focused on this particular issue contribute to the general definition of a world ethic? How can a world ethic help communities achieve greater equity in access to, and ownership of, natural resources? How can the development of shared moral values facilitate partnerships between business, religion, government and citizens in planning the sustainable development of particular regions? How can the ethical assumptions and positions expressed in international law, such as the proposed *Covenant on Environment and Development*, and related conventions and

protocols, become matters of intelligent moral investigation and discussion by the relevant parties?

Barriers that must be overcome

A third problem has to do with the cultural, institutional, and economic divisions that exist within and between nations—barriers that must be overcome if persons in all societies and walks of life are to be empowered to assume responsibility for the environment. These barriers take many forms:

- As a matter of academic study, environmental ethics has emerged as a specialization divided between the fields of philosophy, theology, and the social sciences, and typically separated from other relevant disciplines, such as art, literature, science and natural resource policy. Cross-cultural dialogue, when it occurs, seldom crosses these fields.
- As a matter of practical endeavor, environmental ethics is also divided. Wilderness, animal rights, sustainable use advocates, feminist and deep ecology enthusiasts, vie with one another, sometimes acrimoniously, to influence public opinion and policy. These conflicts are compounded when played out in international and inter-faith arenas where significantly different cultural, social, and environmental needs and values are present.
- Equally problematic are the divisions between the theory and practice of environmental ethics. Advocates often have little appreciation for the cultural and theoretical base undergirding their positions. Public leaders and professionals, including those in government, law, and natural resource policy, typically have limited acquaintance with the literature in environmental ethics; the public at large even less so. And environmental ethicists often do not know the practical issues facing these leaders, professionals and publics.
- Cross-cutting all of these divisions are fundamental inequalities of power and privilege that distort human perception and make efforts to communicate about truth and justice inherently conflictual. Attempts at dialogue on shared principles of global environmental responsibility frequently exclude those of limited education and economic means, and fail to address the need for personal and social transformation and for a greater sharing of power.

Finally, although concern for the environment is shared by large numbers of persons in the developing and developed worlds, explicit concern for environmental ethics is a matter of debate and inquiry among a minority. How can a world environmental ethic become the explicit concern of the majority of humankind? More specifically, how may persons of diverse cultures and walks of life participate in deliberations on environmental ethics so that the values

articulated by international and other organizations and spokespersons are based on an informed and meaningful global consensus?

The need for a world environmental ethics initiative

Many factors, working independently and together, are required if the world is to be moved to a just and sustainable development path. Fear for human survival and appeals to enlightened self-interest are important motivators. Increased scientific knowledge and new resource-efficient technologies are essential. Aggressive international diplomacy and well-informed government and business development strategies are equally necessary. But without shared moral understanding and commitment, none of these factors, alone or together, is sufficient to call forth the wisdom, determination, and sacrifice necessary for comprehensive social change.

While important strides have been made in identifying basic elements of a world environmental ethic, increasing public awareness of the need for a change in values, and building a movement dedicated to advancing a global ethic, most of the work required to elaborate, apply, and gain public support for the ethic remains to be done.

This means that the challenge of a world environmental ethic needs to be responded to with the same intellectual seriousness, and the same institutional and financial support, as any other aspect of conservation.

There is need for a world environmental ethics initiative with sufficient intellectual and institutional resources to address the problems indicated, and enable a creative global conversation on shared environmental values to occur.

POTENTIAL OF THE IUCN ETHICS WORKING GROUP

The IUCN Ethics Working Group (EWG) has worked to promote multidisciplinary and cross-cultural environmental ethics for nearly a decade. Its history of accomplishments, ongoing activities, and special institutional relationships give it a unique potential to launch a world environmental ethics initiative.

Accomplishments

The IUCN Ethics Working Group is an international voluntary network of experts in the field of environmental ethics and related academic disciplines, natural resource policy and management, and environmental communication and advocacy. It works in close association with the World Conservation Union

(IUCN), an organization of 62 states, 99 government agencies, and 575 national and international non-governmental organizations, with a Secretariat headquartered outside Geneva, Switzerland, and offices and affiliated centers throughout the world.

IUCN has a record of significant leadership in the development of a world ethic. It was the principal partner in the launching of the *World Conservation Strategy* in 1980 and was instrumental in the writing and adoption of the *World Charter for Nature* in 1982. In 1991, IUCN, along with its partners, UNEP and WWF, published the second world conservation strategy, *Caring for the Earth*, which made “a world ethic for living sustainably” its first principle.

The EWG has worked to advance a world environmental ethic by preparing papers for journals and books, providing bibliographical and other references to persons throughout the world, sponsoring workshops and conferences, speaking in a wide variety of professional and public fora, and providing personal counsel and advice to IUCN members. Most significantly, between 1984 and 1991 the EWG:

- conducted the consultative process that led to founding the new world conservation strategy, *Caring for the Earth*, on an ethic of “care and respect for the community of life,” and its elaboration in chapter 2 of the strategy. This process began with a workshop at the World Conservation Strategy Conference in Ottawa, Canada in 1986, and included a consultation at the Meadowcreek Project in Arkansas in 1987, and workshops at IUCN General Assemblies in San José, Costa Rica in 1988, and Perth, Australia in 1990. Four separate drafts received written criticism by over 100 persons throughout the world. Following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, and the publication of *Agenda 21*, a steering committee from UNEP, IUCN, and WWF compared *Agenda 21* and *Caring for the Earth* and concluded that “a truly unique aspect of *Caring for the Earth* is its treatment of the ethical question, which provides the strongest single principle that can guide society towards a sustainable path of development.” *Caring for the Earth* recommends four priority actions to advance a world ethic for living sustainably: further development of its principles; its promotion at the national level; its implementation in all sectors of society; and the founding of a world organization to monitor its implementation.
- prepared a pioneering text on world ethics, *Ethics of Environment and Development: Global Challenge, International Response* (Belhaven Press and the University of Arizona Press, 1990, J. Ronald Engel and Joan Gibb Engel, eds.). This work, now in its sixth printing, draws upon the interdisciplinary collaboration among ethicists of environment and development that the EWG helped facilitate through the International Development Ethics Association, and addresses the normative dimensions of sustainable development from the perspectives of religion, science, women’s experience, and humanistic

philosophy. It includes essays by authors from 16 countries, and 5 of the world's faith traditions.

- co-founded with Dieter Hessel the Program on Ecology, Justice and Faith, funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, which seeks to reform the curriculum of North American theological schools in light of the need for religiously-based environmental ethics
- conducted, in association with the World Resources Institute and other sponsors of the *Global Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*, the consultative process leading to a comprehensive proposal by 80 persons in 23 countries on "The Role of Ethics, Culture, and Religion in Conserving Biodiversity: A Blueprint for Research and Action," published in *Ethics, Religion and Biodiversity* (White Horse Press, 1993, Lawrence Hamilton, ed.)
- promoted ecumenical religious inquiry and dialogue on the principles of a world environmental ethic through participation in the Middlebury College symposium, book (Beacon Press, 1992, Steven Rockefeller and John Elder, eds.), and PBS documentary produced by Bill Moyers, each entitled *Spirit and Nature*.
- contributed to the development of the ethical and symbolic dimensions of the biosphere reserve program of UNESCO MAB (Man in the Biosphere) in Australia, France, Italy, Kenya, and the United States. EWG, UNESCO and the Assisi Nature Council co-sponsored a workshop held in Assisi, Italy in 1990, on ethics and the biosphere reserve concept.

New challenges and opportunities

In the past year the EWG has:

- developed an ethical critique of the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law's draft *International Covenant on Environment and Development* by over 30 ethicists in Europe, North and South America, and participated in a CEL workshop on the covenant in Bonn, Germany, in response to an invitation by Parvez Hassan, chair of CEL
- prepared for the IUCN General Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina, January, 1994, with special attention to co-planning Workshop #1 "A New Conservation Ethic" with the IUCN Commission on Environmental Law—this workshop will involve religious and academic leaders from Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, England, Germany, Pakistan, the United States, Thailand, Uruguay and Zimbabwe in further discussion of the elements of a world ethic for living sustainably and how they may be translated into international law

- collaborated with Strachan Donnelley of the Hastings Center in planning two projects: a three-year symposium that will involve Chicago civic and academic leaders in the development of a cultural/ethical vision of long-term regional development and a notion of regional ecological and democratic citizenship; and a major research program on fundamental philosophical and scientific approaches to the values of biodiversity and the ethical obligations they entail

collaborated with Robert and Christine Prescott-Allen, co-chairs of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Specialist Group on Sustainable Use of Wild Species, George Rabb, chair of SSC, and Ted Trzyna, chair of IUCN Commission on Environmental Strategy and Planning, in the conduct of an initial inquiry by nine experts from Africa, Australia, Europe, South America, and the United States on the questions that need to be addressed in preparing international guidelines for the ethical uses of wild species; and a report setting forth a three-year work plan for consideration by IUCN members and potential funding agencies

- collaborated with Dieter Hessel, Director of the Program on Ecology, Justice and Faith, on initial plans for a conference of leading scholars in theological education and religious studies, and their students, to assess the needs for research on religion and the environment, with particular attention to the religious bases for a world ethic for living sustainably, to be held in 1995

History and organization

Chaired by J. Ronald Engel since its inception in 1984, the EWG was initially established “to advise the Director General of the IUCN on how IUCN can play a more effective role in promoting the ethical dimensions of the World Conservation Strategy.” By August 1992, it had grown to include a corresponding membership of 216 persons from 44 countries, with an active leadership of about 25. In 1992, the group was reconstituted as an intercommissional working group within the IUCN Commission on Environmental Strategy and Planning (CESP), chaired by Ted Trzyna of the California Institute of Public Policy. The EWG Steering Committee presently consists of the chairs of each of the five IUCN commissions, the chair of the working group (ex officio); and the head of IUCN Social Policy Services (ex officio).

Persons especially active in the work of the Ethics Working Group include: R. J. Berry (UK), Simone Bilderdeek (Netherlands), Sidney Blair (USA), Stephen Boyden (Australia), Nick Carter (UK), William Clark (Israel), Maria Luisa Cohen (Switzerland), David Crocker (USA), Rick Davis (Japan), Nigel Dower (UK), O. P. Dwivedi (India), Julia Gardner (Canada), David Given (New Zealand), Denis Goulet (USA), Francisco Escobar (Costa Rica), Vernon C. Gilbert (USA), William P. Gregg, Jr. (USA), Eduardo Gudynas (Uruguay), David Hales (USA), Larry Hamilton (USA), Sophie Jakowska (Dominican Republic), Walter Lusigi (Kenya), Jeffrey McNeely (USA), Richard McNeil (USA), Jeff McNeely (USA), David Munro (Canada),

Nancy Nash (Hong Kong), Robert and Christine Prescott-Allen (Canada), Steven Rockefeller (USA), Holmes Rolston III (USA), Stephen Sterling (UK), Uno Svedin (Sweden), Len Webb (Australia).

In 1992, Martin Holdgate, the Director General of IUCN, invited Ron Engel to prepare a paper on the role the Ethics Working Group could play in the follow-up to *Caring for the Earth*. This paper was widely discussed among the leadership of the IUCN Secretariat, and formed the basis for a planning grant awarded to the EWG by the IUCN Council.

An EWG workshop, *Advancing Ethics for Living Sustainably*, was subsequently held in April, 1993, with representatives of five IUCN commissions and twelve partner organizations attending. The workshop concluded that the first priority of the EWG was to launch a global dialogue that would culminate by the year 2000 in a vision of how the diverse cultures of the world can affirm a shared environmental ethic. It also explored ways in which to facilitate the implementation of a world ethic through international environmental law, use of wildlife, sustainable development strategies, and environmental education and communication (see *Advancing Ethics for Living Sustainably*, California Institute for Public Affairs, 1993, J. Ronald Engel and Julie Denny-Hughes, eds.).

Further grants by the IUCN Council and Secretariat enabled the EWG to begin preparations for a World Environmental Ethics Initiative in the summer and fall of 1993. For this purpose, a full time Project Coordinator, Julie Denny-Hughes, and a part time research associate, John Callewaert, were employed. In addition to the activities noted above, the staff consulted with Paul Sochaczewski and Anne Duffy of the Worldwide Fund for Nature International regarding collaborative activities in the area of communication and education, with special attention to the future of *The New Road*, the magazine of the WWF Religion and Conservation Network; and worked with the Director General and the staff of the Social Policy Division (SPS) of the IUCN Secretariat, George Rabb, Susan Trestler, Ted Trzyna and other advisors regarding the preparation of a grant proposal for the first three years of the Initiative.

Throughout the nine year life of the EWG, Meadville/Lombard has donated office and communication facilities, and part-time secretarial assistance.

Unique position

The IUCN Ethics Working Group is uniquely positioned to take leadership in sponsoring a global dialogue and inquiry on the principles and practical implications of a world ethic for living sustainably.

This potential is evident in the number of experts from throughout the world who request membership in the EWG and offer their time and services to its program;

in the requests it receives for information and help and the invitations it receives for collaborative projects; in the support that the EWG now enjoys among the leadership of IUCN and its partner organizations; and in the plans of the Social Policy Services Division of the IUCN Secretariat to include ethics as an important component in its program.

It is also evident in the fact that the EWG is well-positioned to build significant links between the three constituencies necessary to advance a world ethic for living sustainably:

- specialists in studies directly relevant to **environmental ethics**, associated with university and other research centers (religious and secular) with capacities for basic inquiry in the field of environmental ethics
- international, national, and local public institutions and professions directly involved in **conservation activity**
- persons with professional capacities to implement environmental ethics in **major sectors of public life** (law, religion, public policy and advocacy, business, communications)

This unique position derives from the EWG's

- connections to the world conservation movement and the United Nations through IUCN, its partners (WWF, UNEP, UNESCO, WHO), and other international scientific and public policy networks
- access to grass-roots communities in the developing and developed world through its membership
- collegial relationships, which give it the potential for an international network of research and academic centers concerned for environmental ethics
- location in Chicago, one of the largest multicultural and multiracial metropolitan regions of the world, with connections to the faculty and schools of the University of Chicago, and to many persons and organizations active in international conservation
- representation from experts in environmental ethics and development ethics through the International Development Ethics Association (IDEA), and the International Society for Environmental Ethics (ISEE)
- relationships to the world religious community, through the Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, Christian and other religious organizations to which EWG members belong; the Religion and Conservation Network of WWF; and Meadville/Lombard Theological School (affiliate of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago,

and member of the Association of Chicago Theological Schools, the largest single center for theological studies in the United States)

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS INITIATIVE

The World Environmental Ethics Initiative aims to facilitate a global dialogue and inquiry on environmental ethics that will make measurable progress in the elaboration, practical application, and dissemination of a world environmental ethic.

This goal embraces three objectives, no single one of which can be achieved alone. As each has an essential contribution to make to the others, the three objectives need to be pursued simultaneously and in mutual relationship.

Objective One

Elaborate a commanding, credible, and persuasive vision of a world ethic for living sustainably that respects the commonalities and differences between the world's faiths and cultures, and expresses a broad international consensus

Objective Two

Promote and assist with the application of the ethic in connection with major initiatives in the sphere of public policy, including the development of:

- the proposed *International Covenant on Environment and Development* and other international and national covenants, protocols and laws
- a United Nations declaration or charter setting forth the unifying ethical and spiritual principles of world community
- international and regional guidelines for the protection and sustainable use of wild animal and plant communities
- environmental programs in the field of education, including the education of religious leaders, educators, and scholars
- international, national, and regional strategies for sustainable development by business, government, and civic leaders
- an international code of ethics for the professional conduct of individuals and organizations concerned for environmental research, conservation, and advocacy

Objective Three

Gain wide public understanding and support for the world ethic for living sustainably by providing a global forum for the diverse groups and interests now active in the field, and through communication of the ethic to diverse cultural, social, economic, and political constituencies

APPROACH OF THE WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS INITIATIVE

The premise of the World Environmental Ethics Initiative is that environmental responsibility depends upon the presence of shared moral languages that enable persons to talk, think, and act together with regard to the full range of values they perceive and cherish in the natural world.

The importance of shared moral languages

History teaches that vital and enduring moral languages are mixed languages. They involve many approaches to truth, beauty and goodness. Diverse kinds of moral value—rights, duties, rules, virtues, responsibilities, covenants, purposes—exist in intricate interconnections. This distinctly moral vocabulary is embedded in a rich amalgam of metaphors, images, rituals, stories, cosmologies, exemplars, and sacred places—what is often referred to as ethos, civic culture or public myth. Moral languages that in this way weave together people and land, social relationships and environmental relationships, theory and practice, religion, trade, and science, are complex and flexible enough to integrate the environmental values of diverse livelihoods and cultural interests, and meet the demands of moral choice in concrete social settings.

The most important activity that a shared moral language makes possible is **conversation**. Communication between persons and groups with contending ethical perspectives and values is virtually impossible without it. At the same time, dialogue and inquiry on common moral problems and purposes among persons of diverse viewpoints and persuasions is the primary means for the creation of a shared moral language when one is lacking.

In this respect, ethics is, or should be, as much a shared **way** of inquiry, dialogue, and action, as it is **what** is researched, shared, and decided. It has as much to do with such behaviors as acceptance and regard for others, making and remaking mutual promises, empathy, courage to speak from experience and conscience, decisions regarding who is invited to the table to speak, and who speaks when, as it does with what is discussed. The willingness and ability to

stay in the conversation, in spite of fundamental differences of moral conviction, is itself a matter of ethics.

Persons exercise responsibility for the environment in contexts differing in geography, scale, culture, and social opportunity. They are challenged to reflect and choose between competing environmental, social, and personal values as members of domestic households, local communities, voluntary associations, and nations; in relationships between states and peoples, in international organizations; and as world citizens. The need, therefore, is to develop the moral languages appropriate to each of these contexts, and especially the inclusive language that will enable humanity to speak across the divides of wealth, power, and contending religious and political beliefs that characterize the modern world.

Transformative pluralism

The method by which the Initiative will seek to nurture such shared moral languages may be characterized as **transformative pluralism**. This method means two things.

First, that the sources of moral truth and action are many, rather than one, and that ethical analysis must do justice to the full spectrum of values that we perceive in our relationships to people and the natural world in any particular context, as well as to the differences within and between cultures regarding how values are expressed and prioritized.

Second, that the aim of work in global ethics is to create the richest, most inclusive, and most practicable synthesis of these values possible. The task is to transform what may be initially perceived as incompatible elements into multiple values that contribute to the whole. This involves fact-finding, logic, deliberation, imagination, and a willingness to let one's personal perceptions and commitments undergo change. Most of all, it involves broad sympathy, combined with intelligent use of the tools of ethics—ideas of justice, rights, consent, and the common good.

Such a synthetic judgment is not a compromise between competing positions, nor is it a stance of value-neutrality. It is a new organization of experience, and involves a moral position that requires communication and advocacy. Even when moral dialogue and inquiry fail to reach agreement they are worthwhile activities, because they increase awareness among the participants of the diverse values, feelings, and needs that must be addressed in policy decisions, and the choices that must be made.

The Initiative will seek to better understand and develop the method of transformative pluralism and employ it throughout its program. To this end, seven re-enforcing collegial processes will be used:

Dialogue

As a way of approaching human interaction, dialogue means the willingness and ability to both speak and listen, to share one's experience and convictions, to be self-critical and to learn from others. It means maintaining mutual respect and keeping faith with others in spite of differences of background and opinion.

As a principle of social organization, dialogue means that, as much as possible, all relevant perspectives, constituencies, and alternatives be represented in the processes of inquiry and decision-making.

As a method of personal and social transformation, dialogue requires that participants recognize the power relationships at play, honestly confront conflict, and acknowledge the distortions in perception that all parties bring to the engagement.

The Initiative will seek to be:

- **cross-cultural**—engaging the participation of persons of diverse cultures, geographies, and faiths
- **multilingual**—communicating to its membership and to the public in as many languages as feasible
- **multilateral**—engaging persons and organizations active in international, regional, and local contexts, upper income and low income, urban, rural and indigenous societies
- **gender and race inclusive**—engaging women and men of all races
- **multidisciplinary**—engaging persons of diverse professional disciplines and ethical perspectives.

Inquiry

The development of a commanding, credible, and persuasive vision of a world ethic for living sustainably will require rigorous collegial inquiry and the participation of many original and creative minds to:

- develop the approach of transformative pluralism, and its implications for the form and content of a world ethic

- clarify the contributions of the **primary sources** for a world ethic for living sustainably, not only because these are often in contention with one another, but because each is also subject to a variety of interpretations, both within and between cultures:
 - the natural and social sciences
 - traditions of indigenous peoples
 - the world religions
 - the traditions of political, economic, and social democracy
 - moral philosophy
 - the arts and humanities
- understand the **historical factors** involved in the emergence of a movement devoted to advancing a world environmental ethic, the **social forces** that resist it, and those that must be mobilized if it is to be successful
- determine ethical guidelines for addressing **policy issues** in particular social and environmental contexts, including how the elaboration of the world ethic can both inform, and be informed by, these practical inquiries

Communication

A primary approach will be to develop a **common vocabulary** about ethics and conservation practice that is accessible to all participants, and readily translated into the many spoken and written languages of the world. This will require becoming aware of differences of meaning in different cultural and linguistic contexts; and learning how to express the concepts and technical terminology unique to each discipline, especially the moral disciplines themselves, in ways that are understood by all concerned.

A correlative approach will be to develop a **variety of forms of communication**—images as well as words; stories and case studies as well as abstract arguments and scholarly monographs; visual art, music, dance, ceremony, pilgrimage, theater. This many-layered kind of communication is required to reach a broad audience; it is also necessary if the expression of the world ethic for living sustainably is to adequately communicate its holistic content.

Education

The Initiative is itself a process of **shared learning**. The project has few precedents, and each activity will require experimentation, testing, and evaluation. A primary approach will be to expand the process of social learning

to include wider circles of participation. This will require the development of educational resources and techniques for sharing what has been learned with persons in a variety of social and cultural settings.

Voluntary association

Most of the work of the Initiative will be done by volunteers and by volunteer task forces. Structures will be put into place to enable as many volunteers as possible to participate, while at the same time participants will be deliberately recruited from under-represented perspectives and parts of the world. The process of recruitment will involve an effort to help persons develop the skills needed for work in an international organization. The Initiative will use professional staff assistance and try to provide financial and other resources to volunteer project leaders. It will seek to develop a meaningful sense of **community and shared purpose** among volunteer members.

Advocacy

While there will be every effort to make the process of deliberation open and sensitive to all viewpoints, the Initiative also will need to be **intentional** in its advocacy of its evolving vision of a world ethic for living sustainably. This will involve risk of misunderstanding and conflict. The Initiative will work hard to avoid such consequences, and seek to reduce them when and if they occur. It will also endeavor to support those members who experience adversity due to their work on behalf of environmental ethics, or because of the positions they hold on specific ethical issues.

Collaboration

The major accomplishments of the EWG have come by means of **partnership** relationships with organizations that share common aims and values. This will continue to be a key principle in the Initiative, since no single organization could sponsor the activities required to achieve significant knowledge and consensus on global moral values. It will also be a critical principle in funding the Initiative. Once core funding is in place, it will be possible to increase the impact of the Initiative at modest additional cost by collaborating with the institutions and programs of other networks.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES 1994-1996

Over the next three years, the World Environmental Ethics Initiative will make measurable progress in achieving its objectives by means of the following four action agendas:

Develop EWG membership, Steering Committee, and Council of Sponsors

Goal: Build membership and organizational effectiveness of the EWG network

- Expand and formalize membership
 - encourage active involvement by persons from areas of the world, and from racial and socio-economic groups, not currently represented
 - aim for a membership of 500 well-qualified persons from all parts of the world
 - define membership benefits: e.g., newsletter and other communications, access to information and resources on environmental ethics, opportunities for participation in task forces and activities
 - define membership responsibilities: e.g., responsibility to critique drafts of reports, provide information and expert counsel for EWG and IUCN programs, disseminate progress of the Initiative
 - plan for first formal meeting of the membership of the EWG at the IUCN General Assembly 1996, and election of chair by membership
- Establish a Council of Sponsors, composed of persons of international eminence, to advise and promote Initiative
- Increase effectiveness of the EWG Steering Committee
 - expand EWG Steering Committee to assure wide international representation, to include task force chairs and other noted experts
 - hold annual meetings of the Steering Committee
 - develop the capacities of the Steering Committee to provide general oversight of the program of the Initiative, and to evaluate its results

Develop EWG program

Goal: Increase effectiveness and opportunities for participation of IUCN and EWG membership in each of six key program areas

Establish a Task Force on the Philosophy of a World Ethic for Living Sustainably

- Appoint Chair of EWG to chair task force; recruit deputy chairs and members from among international experts in ethics with backgrounds in science, religion, philosophy, and the arts
- Develop work plan for the research necessary to produce discussion papers on the following topics:
 - the general philosophy and approach of the Initiative
 - critical review of contemporary proposals for a world ethic from several cultural perspectives
 - potential contributions and limitations, for the elaboration of a world ethic, of the natural and social sciences, traditions of indigenous peoples, the world religions, the traditions of political, economic, and social democracy, moral philosophy, and the arts and humanities
 - a method for incorporating into the world ethic the contributions of other EWG task forces and activities, and for informing these and other groups of progress on the world ethic
- Hold three meetings, each in a different part of the world, each of which will allow:
 - open exchange with grassroots constituencies on their unique cultural understandings of environmental ethics, and the contributions of these understandings to the development of a world ethic
 - time for extended exchange between task force participants
 - opportunities for participation by the leadership of other EWG task forces and activities
- Distribute discussion papers to EWG membership, IUCN Secretariat staff, and other interested parties, for critical response—thus creating a collegial conversation throughout the EWG on the growing vision of a world ethic for living sustainably

Establish a Task Force on Ethics of the Protection and Use of Wild Species

- Recruit person, or persons, from EWG to co-chair and help implement the work plan on *Guidelines for Ethical Uses of Wild Species*, in collaboration with representatives of the Species Survival Commission Specialist Group on Sustainable Use of Wild Species (see attached documentation)

Establish a Task Force on Ethics and Environmental Law

- Recruit chair, or co-chairs, and members from among international experts in ethics and law
- Respond to invitation by World Council of Churches to fund and co-convene a meeting of the principal organizations seeking to advance an earth charter or declaration to plan strategy for further work
- Develop work plan for activities and discussion papers that will:
 - build further collaborative relationships with IUCN Commission on Environmental Law, continuing the EWG's work on the ethical principles of the proposed *Covenant on Environment and Development*, and pursuing its adoption by the United Nations; with the IUCN Environmental Law Centre; with scholars seeking to develop ethical issues of *Agenda 21* (United Nations Conference, January, 1994); and with other networks
 - critically review contemporary trends in environmental ethics and law, and make recommendations regarding the kinds of foundational ethical principles and legal traditions that are most useful in environmental law (e.g., common law, environmental rights, covenantal obligations, equity)
 - set forth a practical strategy for developing the legal implications of a world ethic for living sustainably in critical national and international arenas

Develop Educational Programs for the World Ethic for Living Sustainably

- In collaboration with the Program on Ecology, Justice and Faith, and other religious networks, such as the International Evangelical Environmental Network, expand the conference of theological educators planned for 1995 to include Christian religious educators from other parts of the world
- In collaboration with the Program on Ecology, Justice and Faith, World Congress of Faiths, WWF Religion and Conservation Network, and other organizations, and building on the 1995 conference, create a planning committee for a 1997

international conference to explore how a world ethic can be made part of the education programs of other world faiths

- In collaboration with the IUCN Commission on Education and Secretariat, and the education faculties at the University of Chicago and the Association of Chicago Theological Schools, research, develop and test an intensive education module on the history, principles, problems, and issues of developing a world ethic for living sustainably, for use by EWG, IUCN personnel, resource managers, and professional educators in diverse disciplines and cultural settings
- Develop opportunities for advanced study in environmental ethics by IUCN and EWG members at the University of Chicago and other centers throughout the world

Develop the Ethics of Sustainable Development

- Continue to collaborate with Hastings Center in development of a three-year symposium on the ethics of sustainable development in the Chicago metropolitan region
- Develop linkages with similar projects planned in other metropolitan regions, e.g. New York, United States, and Sydney, Australia
- Work with IUCN Commission on Environmental Strategy and Planning and Social Policy Services to identify other regions of the world, and other forms this activity should take, e.g. how can ethical inquiry help decide which policy should have precedence in Africa—decentralized, community-based development, or the stabilization of central governments? or, what cultural elements are essential to the success of community-based sustainable development projects?
- Organize a database on the progress being made in different regions of the world to retrieve and develop moral languages appropriate to particular places and cultures and their implications for environmental policy

Develop Code of Conservation Ethics

- Begin discussions with SPS and IUCN Council leadership regarding the need for an international code of conservation ethics and a strategy to develop it

Develop Communications and Publications

Goal: Increase EWG capacities for communication with its membership, with IUCN and partner organizations, and with the public, through publication and computer technology

- Establish advisory committee on communications composed of experts in a variety of media
- Begin publication of multilingual EWG newsletter for membership, either through regular features in CESP Newsletter, or independently
- Edit, publish, and distribute for comment multilingual discussion papers of EWG task forces to EWG membership and other interested parties
- Communicate work of the EWG and developments in the field of environmental ethics to IUCN membership through regular features in the *IUCN Bulletin* and other publications of IUCN and its partners
- Pursue collaboration with WWF and other agencies in changing the format and co-sponsoring *The New Road* so that it becomes the primary interactive communication vehicle for discussion by persons and groups throughout the world regarding progress on a world ethic
- Plan and commission a series of multilingual resource works, including:
 - a series of annual summaries, comparable to *State of the World*, on progress in advancing a world ethic for living sustainably
 - reference handbooks on proposals and bibliographical resources for a world ethic
 - a multilingual *Dictionary* that defines basic concepts and terms in environmental ethics in ordinary language—a first step in developing a common moral vocabulary
- Develop computer network linkage with EWG members and IUCN Secretariat, commissions and members

Develop Support for EWG Membership and Activities

Goal: Raise financial resources and provide staff and other professional and institutional support adequate to achieve objectives of the Environmental Ethics Initiative

- Establish an ethics officer or liaison in the Social Policy Services division of the IUCN Secretariat (headquarters and regional offices) to assure successful development of the Initiative throughout IUCN programs and member organizations
- Build an international network of university and research institutes interested in participating in the work of the EWG, linking, for example, the International Council of Scientific Unions, France; the philosophy department at the University of Lancaster, U.K.; the Centro de Investigación y Promoción Franciscano y Ecológico, Uruguay; Development Alternatives, India; the Department of Maori Studies at Lincoln University, New Zealand; and the Hastings Center, U.S.
- Establish an administrative office for the chair of the EWG in Chicago, to be staffed by:
 - Chair of EWG, responsible for oversight of the Initiative, including relationships to IUCN Council and Secretariat, Council of Sponsors, Steering Committee, and funding sources; coordination of the basic inquiry on the philosophy of a world ethic for living sustainably; research publications
 - Development Officer, responsible for fund-raising and financial management
 - Program Coordinator, responsible for program development, conference planning, task force support
 - Membership/Communications Coordinator, responsible for recruiting, developing, and supporting members; correspondence; printing and communication arrangements, including IUCN publications
 - Secretarial and clerical assistance, responsible for meeting arrangements, travel, filing, data entry, mail lists
 - Interns or research associates, responsible for special projects
- Establish an appropriate legal entity to administer funds for the Initiative

BUDGET

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

1. Ethics Working Group Mail List (1992)
2. Representative Letters of Interest
3. *Caring for the Earth*, chapters 1-2
4. Selected Reviews of *Ethics of Environment and Development*
5. *The Role of Ethics, Culture, and Religion in Conserving Biodiversity: A Blueprint for Research and Action*
6. Consulting Members on Biodiversity (1991)
7. *Advancing Ethics for Living Sustainably: Report of the IUCN Ethics Workshop, April, 1993*
8. *Guidelines for Ethical Uses of Wild Species: A Project Report*
9. *Background Paper on International Documents and the Movement Toward a Global Environmental Ethic*
10. Endorsements
11. *Vita: J. Ronald Engel*

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PROPOSAL CONSULTANTS

December 10 version sent
December 29 version should be sent:

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Ted Trzyna
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Professor Franklin Gamwell (U. of C. Divinity School)
Spencer Lavan ML
Parvez Hassan
Bing Lucas
David Hales (Chicago home address)
Partha Sarathy
Chair of Ecology Commission--name?--in Monaco?
Bryan Norton
Richard Falk
Denis Goulet
Holmes Rolston
Rosemary Ruether
Strachan Donnelley
Dieter Hessel
R. J. Berry
Ben Boer
Nick Robinson

Secretariat:

Martin Holdgate
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Grazia Borrini (Jim Ypsilantis)
Borrini should circulate to such people as Jeremy Carew-Reid, Simon Stuart, Jeff
McNeely, Mike Cockrell, Peter Hislaire, Per Ryden

Persons yet to receive:

David Crocker
Nigel Dower
Paul Sochachevsky WWF

Ted suggests: (need correct names and addresses)
Stephen Viederman, Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
Mike Marien, ed. , Future Survey

POTENTIAL TASK FORCES:

PHILOSOPHY OF A WORLD ETHIC FOR LIVING SUSTAINABLY

Tracy, Rockefeller, Birch, Naess, Kung, Kothari, Braybrooke, Falk, Mazrui, Camacho, Boff, Dower, Rolston)

LAW

DWivedi, Ben Boer, Helen Endre, Douglas Sturm, Don Brown, Francoise Burhenne, Alex Kiss

SUSTAINABLE USE

Bojang, Theakaekara, Lynge, Lindley, Norton, Prescott-Allens

EARTH CHARTER

R. J. Berry

RELIGION

Jakowska, Tabaziba, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Dieter Hessel, McDaniel

