

Harmony with Nature at the United Nations General Assembly

Informal Consultation Brief for Interested Member States

THE DISCUSSION IS ALREADY IN PROGRESS

2009

Harmony with Nature
dialogue begins at the
General Assembly

15

Harmony with Nature
resolutions adopted to
date

30+

Member States
recognizing aspects of the
Rights of Nature

1

For Nature Coalition of
States announced and
growing

Efforts to address the triple planetary crisis have renewed focus on humanity's relationship with Nature. International law is being asked to assess how current frameworks can better address climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and the interdependence between societies and the natural world. The United Nations General Assembly first placed Harmony with Nature on its sustainable development agenda through resolution 64/196 of 21 December 2009, following its designation of 22 April as International Mother Earth Day earlier that year. To date, the General Assembly has adopted fifteen resolutions on Harmony with Nature, most recently resolution 79/210 of 19 December 2024, advancing a global dialogue on humanity's relationship with Nature and the need to rethink environmental governance amid accelerating ecological crises. Through its resolutions, the General Assembly has explored diverse approaches that recognize the intrinsic value of Nature and encourage more holistic, ecologically balanced frameworks for sustainable development. This evolving dialogue reflects a growing recognition that long-term human well-being depends on healthy, resilient ecosystems and that environmental decision-making should account not only for human interests but also for the integrity of the natural world.

After more than fifteen years of United Nations dialogue under the Harmony with Nature agenda, Panama proposes that the General Assembly launch an open, transparent, inclusive and Member State-led intergovernmental process to negotiate a proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature.

This initiative does not predetermine outcomes or prescribe any domestic legal model. Instead, it aims to provide a structured multilateral framework for Member States to collectively examine, discuss, and negotiate emerging approaches to humanity's relationship with Nature, drawing on diverse legal traditions, scientific knowledge, Indigenous worldviews, and national experiences.

For more information or to initiate a conversation, please contact the Permanent Mission of Panama, Ministry of Environment, and forNature team using **all five** of the emails below.

National practice is increasingly shaping this area of international law. Rights of Nature initiatives have been documented in dozens of countries and territories through constitutional provisions, national and subnational legislation, judicial decisions, Indigenous legal systems and other legal and policy initiatives. Their legal form and effect vary significantly. Among the clearest national examples are Ecuador, Bolivia, New Zealand, Spain and Panama, although their legal approaches differ considerably.

The proposed process respects the diversity of legal, constitutional, cultural, philosophical, and policy approaches among Member States. Participation does not require endorsement of any specific legal framework and does not affect national positions on future negotiations.

If negotiated and agreed by Member States, a United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature could serve as a common reference for ongoing international dialogue and cooperation, reflecting evolving approaches to humanity's relationship with Nature.

As with previous General Assembly declarations, a Universal Declaration could help develop shared principles, promote policy coherence, encourage the exchange of national experiences, and strengthen international cooperation on global environmental challenges.

THE DIPLOMATIC PROCESS AND LEGAL BASIS

LEGAL AND NORMATIVE FOUNDATIONS

1. UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRACTICE.

Harmony with Nature resolutions have progressively advanced international reflection on humanity's relationship with Nature.

2. NATIONAL LEGISLATION AND JURISPRUDENCE.

An increasing number of States and courts have explored legal approaches that recognize the intrinsic value of ecosystems and strengthen environmental stewardship.

3. KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK.

The Framework expressly recognizes diverse value systems, including, for countries that recognize them, rights of Nature and rights of Mother Earth, as integral to its implementation.

4. INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY OPINIONS.

Recent advisory opinions of ITLOS, the International Court of Justice, and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have addressed climate change and States' environmental obligations from their respective legal mandates. Advisory Opinion OC-32/25 of the Inter-American Court went further by expressly addressing the legal status and rights of Nature.

5. EXISTING UN PRACTICE.

The General Assembly has repeatedly used co-facilitated processes to support dialogue, identify areas of convergence, and prepare recommendations on emerging international issues before formal negotiations.

6. GROWING INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.

National legislation, constitutional provisions, judicial decisions, and public policy initiatives across multiple regions demonstrate increasing international engagement with concepts relating to the Rights of Nature and Earth-centered approaches to environmental governance.

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WHAT PANAMA WILL PROPOSE AT THE EIGHTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Panama proposes the following Operational Paragraphs, reflected in the current draft of the Harmony with Nature resolution as paragraphs 18, 19 and 20:

18. Requests the President of the General Assembly to appoint, upon adoption of the present resolution, two co-facilitators, one from a developing country and one from a developed country, to lead an open, transparent and inclusive intergovernmental negotiation process to be launched in the eighty-second session of the General Assembly, with the meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, aimed at preparing a proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature.

19. Stresses that the negotiation process shall be intergovernmental and State-led, with Member States retaining ownership of and responsibility for its conduct and outcome, while ensuring the open, transparent, structured and meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders, including civil society organizations, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and the scientific and academic communities, in accordance with the rules of procedure and established practice of the General Assembly.

20. Requests the co-facilitators to submit to the General Assembly at the end of its eighty-first session an Elements Paper containing recommendations and possible elements for the negotiation of a proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature, for consideration by Member States within existing resources.

In addition, Panama supports the following Operational Paragraphs of the Harmony with Nature resolution, reflected in the current draft as paragraphs 4 and 6:

4. Requests the President of the General Assembly to convene at the eighty-first session of the Assembly a one-day high-level meeting on Harmony with Nature and Living Well, through existing resources, to be held on 22 April 2027 at the plenary meetings during the commemoration of International Mother Earth Day, with participation of the United Nations system and multi-stakeholder participation from independent experts, civil society, academia and other relevant stakeholders, in particular Indigenous Peoples and local communities, that continues to reinforce multilateralism through the discussion of alternative holistic approaches based on diverse world views that may contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

6. Encourages the experts of the Harmony with Nature Knowledge Network to continue their study of the evolution of international, regional, local and national initiatives on the protection of Mother Earth and the recognition of the rights of Nature, as applicable, to be considered as a contribution to the consultative process established under the present resolution, and by the Secretary-General in his report on the implementation of the present resolution.

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THE PROCESS STEP BY STEP



THE FOR NATURE COALITION OF STATES

Panama is building support for the proposed intergovernmental process by forming the For Nature Coalition of States.

The Coalition is an informal, decentralized, and voluntary platform for consultation among interested Member States to exchange experiences, share perspectives, and contribute to ongoing discussions on a proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature as part of the Harmony with Nature process.

The Coalition provides a forum for dialogue, information-sharing, and diplomatic engagement among interested Member States. It is designed to complement, not replace, formal intergovernmental negotiations within the General Assembly.

Participation in the Coalition does not imply endorsement of any specific legal framework, negotiated outcome, future instrument, or text. It demonstrates a willingness to engage constructively in dialogue and explore possible pathways forward.

WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS IN PRACTICE

Participation allows interested Member States the opportunity to actively shape an emerging multilateral discussion of global significance.

Engaging constructively in consultations on the upcoming Harmony with Nature resolution is the principal immediate opportunity for interested Member States to help shape the proposed process.

By participating in the decentralized Coalition and the co-facilitated consultation and negotiation process within the Harmony with Nature programme, Member States can help shape the scope, content, and direction of future discussions on a proposed United Nations Universal Declaration of the Rights of Nature, while fully preserving their sovereign positions regarding any future negotiated outcome.

Participating allows Member States to contribute perspectives, share national experiences, identify areas of convergence, and help shape an inclusive process from the outset.

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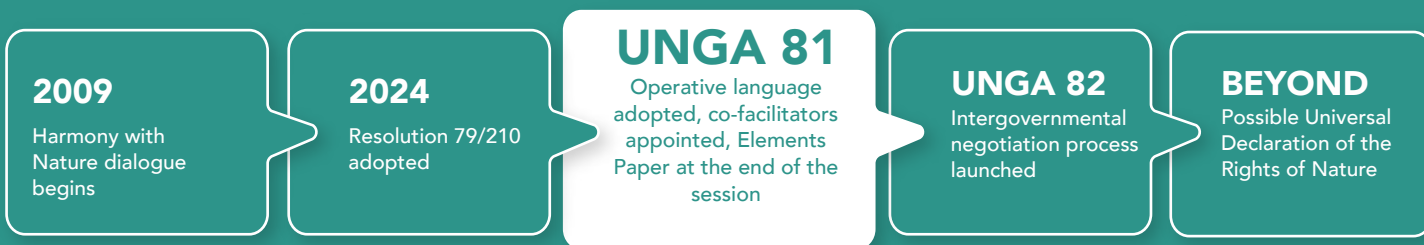
THE INVITATION

Panama invites your Government to join or engage with the For Nature Coalition of States and participate in consultations on the proposed intergovernmental process under Harmony with Nature.

The success and legitimacy of any future process will depend on broad participation across diverse legal systems, cultures, regions, and development contexts. By joining the Coalition, Member States do not commit to any predetermined legal outcome; they help ensure that future discussions reflect the widest possible diversity of perspectives and approaches.

Panama welcomes dialogue with all interested Member States and looks forward to advancing this discussion together within the United Nations framework.

YOUR PLACE IN THE PROCESS



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