

# THE PEOPLE'S CHARTER FOR AFRICA

## [Discussion draft 1]

We, the peoples of South Africa,

Grateful to Africa for feeding our bodies, sheltering us, inspiring our imaginations, and shaping our many cultures and spiritual beliefs;

Mindful that the ancestral wisdom of Africa teaches that we come into being through our relationships with the whole community of life and that to unfold our full humanity we must respect and live in peace with all beings;

Inspired by our love for this ancient land and for the animals, plants, mountains and rivers that are our kin and who safeguard the wellbeing our people;

Mourning the harm that has been caused to the community of life by the arrogant and disrespectful manner in which industrialised societies treat other members of that community;

Convinced of the need to take decisive action to turn the course of our societies away from selfishness, greed, exploitation, and separateness;

Determined to create healthy human communities in which everyone lives well through respecting Earth in all her many forms;

Standing in solidarity with all who defend the rights of the natural communities to which we belong;

Pledge ourselves to strive whole-heartedly together to live in harmony within the community of life and to respect and defend the rights of all beings to fulfil their role within that community.

### **Earth is sacred**

Earth is sacred to us and no person or legal entity has the right to pollute or degrade the soils, waters, and atmosphere that sustain life.

All plants, animals and other creatures are our kin and we shall respect, uphold and defend their rights to play their unique role within the community of life.

Sacred forests, pools, mountains and other places shall remain wild.

### **Each has the right to its place in the community**

Every creature, large or small, every plant, rock, mountain, river, or sea that has come into being has the right to exist in its place, to be respected and to fulfil its role within the community of life.

**All shall live well**

We shall respect the rights of all the other members of the natural communities to which we belong so that all may live well in harmony with one another.

We shall safeguard the fertility of the soils, the purity of water and air, and the health of natural communities that make living well possible so that all beings can live well now and in the future.

Human communities shall provide their people with food, water, shelter and social opportunities in ways that do not prevent natural communities from doing the same for their other members.

No person has the right to pursue their own wellbeing at the expense of the natural communities, systems and processes that sustain us all.

**A giving for every taking**

Every person and each generation shall maintain natural balances by giving to natural communities in return for what they receive.

Until the composition of the atmosphere is restored to balance each person and each generation must ensure that their presence on Earth causes more carbon to be removed from the atmosphere than is release into it.

**Healing shall replace exploitation**

Human activities that disrupt vital ecological balances and functions shall be stopped and replaced with practices that improve the health of natural communities.

Practices that erode the land and deplete the natural fertility of the soil shall be replaced with growing and harvesting practices that work with natural processes to enhance the fertility of the land and the health and resilience of natural communities.

**Communities shall decide for themselves**

The rights of people to benefit from the land and other beings flows from our relationships with them and decisions that impact on the integrity or health of a natural community shall be made by people who have deep relationships with that community and will experience the consequences of the decisions most directly.

Those who are not part of a natural community do not have the right to make decisions or take actions that harm or threaten the integrity, health or functioning of that community.

Those who intentionally or recklessly damage natural communities or put them at risk shall forfeit the right to make decisions that may harm them.

**Communities shall protect themselves**

Each community has the right to defend itself from being harmed by outsiders.

People who respect and live in harmony with the other members of a natural community shall care for and defend that community and stop human activities that they have good reason to believe may harm the community.

### **Life before property and profit**

The rights of present and future generations to live in harmony within healthy natural communities shall prevail over the rights of any person or legal entity to property or profits.

The interests of corporations, the state and other artificial entities shall not be permitted to take precedence over the interests of natural communities.

### **Those that harm Earth shall be held accountable**

Any person or legal entity that harms or profits at the expense of a natural community shall be held accountable for restoring its integrity, functioning and health.

No person shall be permitted to use corporations or other legal devices to avoid or limit their responsibilities to their fellow members of natural communities.

Corporations and legal entities that harm or violate the rights of natural communities shall forfeit their privileges as legal persons.

### **All shall have legal rights**

The *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth* shall be adopted and implemented.

Laws that recognise, respect, and protect the rights of all members of natural communities shall replace those that give people or legal entities the right to pollute the waters, seas, soils, and atmosphere, to inflict cruelty and to violate the rights of natural communities.

### **Public bodies shall safeguard the conditions for living well**

Public bodies shall promote human development through living well in respectful co-existence within natural communities and shall safeguard the conditions necessary to do so.

In order to do so they shall:

- (a) make the effective protection of the integrity and health of natural communities and the maintenance of the conditions necessary to live well their highest priority;
- (b) develop and implement policies, laws and systems that prevent human activities from disrupting the natural processes and functions on which we all depend;
- (c) cease funding activities that disrupt or endanger vital natural processes and systems; and

(d) promote values, technologies, production methods and behaviour patterns that enable people to live well and that benefit the whole community of life.

Let all people who love Earth now say, as we say here:

**WE SHALL STRIVE TOGETHER, INSPIRED BY OUR LOVE OF LIFE UNTIL ALL ARE LIVING WELL!**

**MAYIBUYE IAFRIKA!**

**IAFRIKA MAYIBUYE!**