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In recognition of Earth Day, the U.N. General Assembly met on April 21st to discuss a new, fundamental shift in law and policy to better protect Earth – “Earth Jurisprudence,” or Earth-centered governance.

As observed by the President of the U.N. General Assembly, “Earth Jurisprudence represents the deeply interconnected nature of human and planetary well-being,” and so is an approach “absolutely essential to ending the ongoing destruction of biodiversity.” He criticized “our current human-centered worldview,” which trivializes Earth as “simply full of ‘resources’ to be exploited ... for the exclusive benefit of our own species.”

The U.N. Under-Secretary-General then condemned “relat[ing] to Nature with only our self-interest in mind.” He praised the increasing number of nations, most recently [New Zealand and India](#), who have “taken action to set this situation right” by recognizing in law the rights of nature to exist and thrive.

Invited experts, including [Planet Pledge](#), discussed how to implement Earth Jurisprudence and rights of nature worldwide. Ecological economists explained that the economy must serve society, which in turn must serve the Earth, from which our well-being arises. Indigenous peoples’ representatives spoke to the wisdom of traditions that recognize that nature is our relative, not a commodity. And all called for a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Nature, to complement the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights and U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The [U.N. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) envisions a world “where all life can thrive.” As Planet Pledge reminded the General Assembly, “Earth is the source of the laws that govern our lives in every respect.” To achieve a thriving Earth, we must shift our human laws and practices to reflect our fundamental relationship with Earth, including by recognizing nature’s own rights to exist, thrive, and evolve.

For more information, please see the following:

- [Expert Report on Earth Jurisprudence to the United Nations](#)
- [Testimony to the United Nations of Planet Pledge \[PDF\]](#)
- The archived proceedings at <http://webtv.un.org>
- [Harmony with Nature](#)

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