

HALIFAX DECLARATION

Human demands on the planet are now of a volume and kind that, unless changed substantially, threaten the future wellbeing of all living species. Universities and their graduates must be significant actors if those demands are now to be shaped into the sustainable and equitable forms necessary for a wholesome future environment.

As the international community marshals its endeavours for a sustainable future, focused on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Brazil in 1992, universities in all countries are increasingly examining their own roles and responsibilities. At Talloires, France in October 1990, a conference held under the auspices of Tufts University of the United States issued a declaration of environmental commitment that has attracted the support of more than 100 universities from many countries. At Halifax, Canada in December 1991, a gathering of university representatives addressed the challenge of environmentally sustainable development at the call of the International Association of Universities (IAU), the United Nations University (UNU), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), and Dalhousie University.

The Dalhousie meeting added its voice to those many others worldwide that are deeply concerned about the continuing widespread degradation of the Earth's environment, about the pervasive influence of poverty on the process, and about the unsustainable environmental practices now so widespread. The meeting expressed the belief that solutions to these problems can be effective only to the extent that the mutual vulnerability of all societies, in the South and in the North, is recognized, and that the energies and skills of people everywhere be employed in a positive, cooperative fashion. Because the educational, research and public service roles of universities enable them to be competent, effective contributors to the major attitudinal and policy changes necessary for a sustainable future, the Dalhousie meeting invited the dedication of all universities to the following actions:

1. To ensure that the voice of the university be clear and uncompromising in its commitment to the principle and practice of sustainable development within the university, and at the local, national and global levels.
2. To utilize the intellectual resources of the university to encourage a better understanding on the part of society of the physical and biological and social dangers facing the planet Earth.
3. To emphasize the ethical obligation of the present generation to overcome those current malpractices of resource utilization and those widespread circumstances of intolerable human disparity which lie at the root of environmental unsustainability.
4. To establish whatever programmes are necessary within the university to generate the capability and the capacity necessary to diminish environmental illiteracy and enhance ethical awareness on the part of all graduating students.
5. To cooperate with one another and with all segments of society in the pursuit of practical, effective revision and reversals of those current practices which contribute to environmental degradation, to South-North disparities and to inter-generational inequity.
6. To employ all channels open to the university to communicate these undertakings to UNCED, to governments and to the public at large.

Prepared at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada, 11 December 1991.