

Declaration of Dependence on Nature

Celebrated to mark the
first *Rights of Nature Day*
on 23 September 2026

Preamble

Recognising that human beings are not entities independent of nature, but rather part of the wider community of life that is the biosphere, and that their existence is inextricably linked to healthy soils, clean water, pure air, a stable climate and the diversity of life;

concerned that, in our world dominated by fossil capitalism, a large proportion of humanity lives and conducts its economic activities as though we were independent of nature and had signed a 'Declaration of Independence from Nature';

bearing in mind the ongoing destruction of the irreplaceable, so that we find ourselves in the midst of the sixth mass extinction – the first for which a single species is wilfully responsible;

in view of the fact that forests are being cleared or allowed to burn, land is being sealed, rivers are being polluted, wetlands drained and oceans warmed, while animals, plants and entire ecosystems are being exploited and the atmosphere misused as a dumping ground for greenhouse gases;

concerned that, in Austria too, valuable arable land is being lost to motorways and industrial estates, data centres approved without adequate environmental assessments, hydroelectric power stations built at the expense of species-rich habitats, and environment- and climate-damaging economic practices continue to be subsidised with public funds;

recognising that this often irreversible destruction is carried out in the name of progress, benefiting only a small circle of privileged people and enabling them to amass ever greater and more destructive excess wealth, the negative consequences being borne by the general public;

aware that it is, above all, the people and the environment of the global south who suffer the ecological and social consequences of this economic system, the benefits and burdens of which are distributed with extreme inequality;

alarmed by record temperatures, extreme heatwaves, burning forests, droughts, water shortages and parched landscapes, which make us increasingly aware of the vulnerability of our livelihood;

in recognition of the intrinsic value of the natural world and the right of all living beings and ecosystems to exist, to flourish, to regeneration and restoration;

convinced that nature must be recognised as an independent protagonist and a legal entity, and that the protection of its vital force and capacity for regeneration must become a mandatory basis for political, legal and economic action;

and driven by a sense of responsibility to present and future generations, as well as to the entire community of living beings,

we affirm our dependence on nature and our obligation to respect, protect and defend the vital foundations of our shared existence.

Declaration of Dependence

Human rights, values such as freedom, equality and solidarity presuppose a functioning biosphere and a respectful approach to our environment. That is why, on this first *Rights of Nature Day*, we – as the human part of the broad fabric of life – declare our dependence on nature and our will to shape our relationship with nature in a way that makes it possible for everyone to thrive.

In the habitats and territories that afford us shelter, and that make us what we are, we celebrate this dependence with a *Declaration of Dependence* expressing our deep affinity and sense of community with all living beings.

Nature gives unconditionally from its sources; we do not have freedom to appropriate these living gifts to use for our own resources.

Rights of Nature: a new perspective that can stop the destruction and restore equilibrium.

In 2008, Ecuador was the first country in the world to enshrine the Rights of Nature (*pachamama*/Mother Earth) in its constitution. This enabled prevention of the destruction of important ecosystems there. In 2022, Spain recognised the Mar Menor saltwater lagoon as a legal entity, so that citizens can take legal action to protect it.

Worldwide, there are over 500 initiatives for the Rights of Nature (www.ecojurisprudence.org).

These are all an inspiration for us.

Austria, too, although it is seeing a growing number of initiatives for the recognition of the Rights of Nature, has as yet accorded these rights no legal recognition.

In line with the Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature (GARN), we are therefore committed to ensuring that in Austria, too, the living natural world has intrinsic value, being more than merely the benefits it provides to mankind.

In Austria, too, rivers, floodplains and lakes, mountains, forests and other ecosystems should be recognised as holders of their own rights, so that they can defend and seek legal redress for their integrity, existence, protection and restoration.

23 September 2026, the day on which we first pledge ourselves to this Declaration of Dependence, also marks the first *Rights of Nature Day*, which we intend to observe annually from now on, in conjunction with the exchange initiative rightsofnatureday.earth

This date lies at the September equinox, The astronomical solstice, when the Sun is directly overhead at the equator and both hemispheres receive almost equal amounts of sunlight.

It is the day when the beginning of autumn in the northern hemisphere coincides with the beginning of spring in the southern hemisphere.

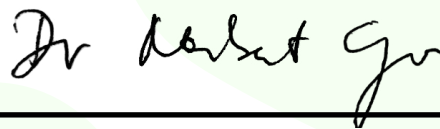
On this day, for thousands of years, people have celebrated being an integral part of mother earth and the cosmos.

We are taking this day as an opportunity to ground ourselves deeply in the flow of nature.

We connect with one another, united in our global, peaceful resistance against the destruction of nature.

Together, we celebrate the abundance of life and the fact that we are part of nature.

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