

DECLARATION OF INTERDEPENDENCE (1976)

Preamble

When in the course of history the threat of extinction confronts mankind, it is necessary for the people of the United States to declare their interdependence with the people of all nations and to embrace those principles and build those institutions which will enable mankind to survive and civilization to flourish.

Two centuries ago our forefathers brought forth a new nation; now we must join with others to bring forth a new world order. On this historic occasion it is proper that the American people should reaffirm those principles on which the United States of America was founded, acknowledge the new crisis which confronts them, accept the new obligations which history imposes upon them, and set forth the causes which impel them to affirm before all people their commitment to a Declaration of Interdependence.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that the inequalities and injustices which afflict so much of the human race as the product of history and society, not of God or nature; that people everywhere are entitled to the blessings of life and liberty, peace and security and the realization of their full potential; that they have an inescapable moral obligation to preserve those rights for posterity; and that to achieve these ends all the peoples and nations of the globe should acknowledge their interdependence and join together to dedicate their minds and their hearts to the solution of those problems which threaten their survival.

To establish a new world order of compassion, peace, justice and security. It is essential that mankind free itself from the limitations of national prejudice, and acknowledge that the forces that unite it are incomparably deeper than those that divide it – that all people are part of one global community, dependent on one body of resources, bound together by the ties of a common humanity and associated in a common adventure on the planet earth.

Let us then join together to vindicate and realize this great truth that mankind is one, and as one will nobly save or irreparably lose the heritage of thousands of years of civilization to survive.

Affirmations

WE AFFIRM that the resources of the globe are finite, not infinite, that they are the heritage of no one nation or generation, but of all peoples, nations and of posterity, and that our deepest obligation is to transmit to that posterity a planet richer in material bounty, in beauty and in delight than we found it. Narrow notions of national sovereignty must not be permitted to curtail that obligation.

WE AFFIRM that the exploitation of the poor by the rich, and the weak by the strong violates our common humanity and denies to large segments of society the blessings of life, liberty, and happiness. We recognize a moral obligation to strive for a more prudent and more equitable sharing of the resources of the earth in order to ameliorate poverty, hunger and disease.

WE AFFIRM that the resources of nature are sufficient to nourish and sustain all the present inhabitants of the globe and that there is an obligation on every society to distribute those resources equitably, along with a corollary obligation upon every society to assure that its population does not place upon Nature a burden heavier than it can bear.

WE AFFIRM our responsibility to help create conditions which will make for peace and security and to help build more effective machinery for keeping peace among nations. Because the insensate accumulation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons under international supervision. We deplore the reliance on force to settle disputes between nation states and between rival groups within such states.

WE AFFIRM that the oceans are the common property of mankind whose dependence on their incomparable resources of nourishment and strength will, in the next century, become crucial for human survival, and that their exploitation should be so regulated as to serve the interests of the entire globe, and of future generations.

WE AFFIRM that the pollution flows with the waters and flies with the winds, that it recognizes no boundary lines and penetrates all defenses, that it works irreparable damage alike to Nature, and to Mankind – threatening with extinction the life of the seas, the flora and fauna of the earth, the health of the people in cities and the countryside alike – and that it can be adequately controlled only through international cooperation.

WE AFFIRM that the exploration and utilization of outer space is a matter equally important to all the nations of the globe and that no nation can be permitted to exploit or develop the potentialities of the planetary system exclusively for its own benefit.

WE AFFIRM that the economy of all nations is a seamless web, and that no one nation can any longer effectively maintain its processes of production and monetary systems without recognizing the necessity for collaborative regulation by international authorities.

WE AFFIRM that in a civilized society, the institutions of science and the arts are never at war and call upon all nations to exempt these institutions from the claims of chauvinistic nationalism and to foster that great community of learning and creativity whose benign function is to advance civilization and the health and happiness of mankind.

WE AFFIRM that a world without law is a world without order, and we call upon all nations to strengthen and to sustain the United Nations and its specialized agencies, and other institutions of world order, and to broaden the jurisdiction of the World Court, that these may preside over a reign of law that will not only end wars but end as well that mindless violence which terrorizes our society even in times of peace.

We can no longer afford to make little plans, allow ourselves to be the captives of events and forces over which we have no control, consult our fears rather than our hopes. We call upon the American people, on the threshold of the third century of their national existence, to display once again that boldness, enterprise, magnanimity and vision which enabled the founders of our republic to bring forth a new nation and inaugurate a new era in human history. The fate of humanity hangs in the balance.

Throughout the globe, hearts and hopes wait upon us. We summon all Mankind to unite to meet the great challenge.

—Henry Steele Commager

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October 24, 1975

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International Development Association
International Finance Corporation
International Labor Organization
International Monetary Fund
International Telecommunications Union
United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
United Nation's Children Fund
Universal Postal Union
World Health Organization
World Meteorological Organization

The Interdependence Assemblies, their concluding consultation, and Convocation will provide the initial 1976 program agenda for the Bicentennial era paralleling the thirteen years matching the period between 1776 and final adoption of the U.S. Constitution in 1789.

In the context of a Bicentennial Era program spanning thirteen years, the nation's

primary and secondary schools call out for involvement. The graduates of 1976 will find themselves in positions of decision-making authority before the program reaches its conclusion. And the path of knowledge for kindergarten children of the Bicentennial year will parallel the entire program. It is timely, therefore, to reach as many students as possible at all grade levels in our primary and secondary schools to carry an awareness of Interdependence into America's third century. These very students will be called upon to make decisions based on the ideas set forth in the Declaration and the actions initiated by participating bodies.

The World Affairs Council of Philadelphia will expand its already well-established school program, and work to ensure that Declaration and its precepts will be included in the curricula and the texts of our schools. Starting with the schools of our region as a base, the prospects for national involvement are realistic and are being actively pursued. The National Education Association, Overseas Development Council, and Foreign Policy Association are assisting in this effort.