



Statement on nomadic ethics and intercultural dialogue

This Statement was issued by the participants at the Conference on Nomadic Culture and Intercultural Dialogue, held in Ulaanbaatar on June 22-23, 2024.

As employed in the policy and programming of UNESCO and similar organizations, *intercultural dialogue* refers to purposeful, transformative engagement among individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds. It aims to deepen cross-cultural understanding, strengthen shared values, and ultimately contribute to peaceful and respectful co-existence. Intercultural dialogue is a deliberate and active communicative strategy that incorporates the sharing of scholarly knowledge, creative forms of expression and social exchanges between people. It can be integrated within various settings, including formal education, research projects, museum exhibitions, festivals, or workshops, and through activities such as storytelling, role plays, or group discussions. Intercultural dialogue always requires an openness to co-learning, a desire to overcome differences, and an awareness of one's prejudices.

Intercultural dialogue is fundamentally related to values and ethics, as it seeks to engage points of difference that stem from the cross-cultural diversity of experiences, traditions, and social forms. At the Conference on Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue, we sought to build an understanding of distinct ethical challenges and perspectives

Nomadic Studies, Issue 31: Nomads, Ethics, and Intercultural Dialogue. © Copyright 2024. This work is licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). Published by the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations under the auspices of UNESCO.

from the standpoint of nomadic peoples, with the explicit goal of developing or suggesting strategies for intercultural dialogue.

PREAMBLE

We, representatives of scholars, artists, Indigenous Elders, herders, and practitioners, gathered in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, from 22 to 23 June 2023 to examine concepts and practices of nomadic ethics, explore practices and opportunities for intercultural dialogue, and discuss how to advance such dialogue in the 21st century.

We emphasize that nomadic peoples – including Indigenous, traditional, tribal and other mobile peoples – are diverse groups for whom mobility has traditionally constituted a form of cultural expression and economic organization.

However, nomadic peoples have been subject to socio-economic exclusion and negative cultural stereotypes. Mobile cultures have been subject to forced transformations through educational campaigns, restrictions on mobility, land appropriation, or sedentist policies. In response to these ongoing dynamics, the conference deliberated on ethics and intercultural dialogue to foster inclusion and understanding.

The Conference produced the following points for further investigation and discussion:

1. “Nomadic ethics” describes moral outlooks guided by mobile relationships with places and resources. Mobility itself may be considered ethical or virtuous.
2. Ethics within nomadic societies takes many forms, reflecting the diversity of mobile groups and settings.
3. The cultural rights of mobile people, which tend to be neglected in state policies and international development discourse, need to be considered, defined and asserted more widely where appropriate.
4. Within nomadic societies, changes to ethical perspectives may accompany broader social transformations as driven by technological and economic shifts.
5. Despite socio-economic transformations, many groups who self-identify as “nomadic” wish to resist the loss of cultural practices and ethical values.
6. The knowledge and moral teachings of nomadic peoples continue to be transmitted among people who do not otherwise participate in “nomadic”

livelihoods through oral tradition, ceremony, formal education, or affinities to nomadic groups.

7. Practices and ethical values associated with nomadic culture may become a point of social exclusion, as with the prohibition and discrimination against some customary practices in an urban environment.
8. Historically, nomadic people have contributed to intercultural dialogue and a culture of peace.
9. Nomadic practices are essential to adaptation to economic, environmental, and social insecurities and crises, including pandemics, storms, droughts, dzud, and similar shocks.
10. We are all called upon to contribute to decolonizing processes by which knowledge about nomadic people and their ethics is created and shared.

CALL TO ACTION

Remarking that the cultural needs of nomadic peoples lack representation within mainstream development frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals;

Building on the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures (2022) and anticipating the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (2026);

Endorsing and guided by the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Dana Declaration on Mobile Peoples and Conservation (2002), and the Dana Manifesto (2020);

Endorsing UNESCO's position on Intercultural Dialogue, which emphasizes the need to live together and to acknowledge the value of knowledge and wisdom owned and actively used by nomadic peoples around the world as part of our toolkit for sustainable subsistence and co-existence;

Recognizing that ethical principles and virtues may be communicated through a variety of means, including customary rules, language and proverbs, formal education, stories and teachings, material culture, spatial organization, cosmologies, honorific practices, and hospitality; and

Supporting the values that underpin intercultural dialogue, including empathy and an openness to learning from others;

We call on the International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations under the Auspices of UNESCO (UNESCO-IISNC) to:

- Include Intercultural Dialogue as a strategic priority within its regular programming;
- Initiate a bi-annual conference focusing on Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue;
- Enhance communications among members and stakeholders as a means of encouraging discussion of nomadic ethics and intercultural dialogue, prioritizing open access to online publications, including the journals *Nomadic Studies* and *Intercultural Dialogue*;
- Facilitate exhibitions, creative works, meetings, and collaborations between scholars and nomadic people;
- Create a Working Group to study options to enhance the ethics of academic and applied research involving nomadic peoples, including data sharing with communities;
- In consultation with the National Commissions for UNESCO of member states, advocate for the inclusion of themes related to nomadic culture and ethics in UNESCO programming, notably in the implementation of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity; and
- Work with members and groups with shared interests, including the IUAES Commission on Nomadic Peoples and IYRP 2026, to disseminate the findings of the Conference on Nomadic Ethics and Intercultural Dialogue.

We call on scholars to:

- Promote the cultural rights of nomadic peoples through their work and communication with their networks;
- Promote UNESCO-IISNC journals and book series, and submit their research to these publication venues;

NOMADIC STUDIES 31: Nomads, Ethics, and Intercultural Dialogue

- Contribute to research-creation activities supporting Intercultural Dialogue, such as storytelling, film, exhibitions, workshops, and performances;
- Commemorate the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development;
- Document and study the ethical outlooks of nomadic peoples, how they are changing, and how they are threatened or safeguarded in contact with sedentist cultures and ideologies; and
- Develop strategies and methodologies for intercultural dialogue about nomadic peoples and cultures.

Ulaanbaatar, June 23, 2023