

EARTH CHARTER STRATEGY: 2001-2002

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade the international Earth Charter Initiative conducted a world wide, cross cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. Hundreds of organization and thousands of individuals participated. Guided by this global conversation, the Initiative drafted the Earth Charter as a people's declaration that gives expression to an emerging global consensus on fundamental values and principles for a just and sustainable world.

The Earth Charter seeks to promote awareness of the major challenges and choices facing humanity. It recognizes that in the midst of great diversity we live in an increasingly interdependent world and that a global partnership involving civil society, business, and government is essential. It is an urgent call for the changes in life style, institutional practice, and public policy required to protect the larger living world and to ensure a better future for all.

1. Mission

The mission of this phase of the Earth Charter Initiative is to establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable world based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Earth Charter Initiative are:

- 1.To disseminate the Earth Charter to individuals and organizations in all sectors of society throughout the world.
- 2.To promote the educational use of the Earth Charter in schools, universities, faith communities, and a variety of other settings, and to develop and distribute the necessary supporting materials.
- 3.To encourage and support the use, implementation, and endorsement of the Earth Charter by civil society, business, and government at all levels.
- 4.To seek endorsement of the Earth Charter by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, the tenth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit.

3. Uses of The Earth Charter

The Earth Charter recognizes that humanity's environmental, economic, social, and spiritual challenges are interrelated and require holistic thinking and integrated problem solving. It provides a much-needed fresh, broad conception of a sustainable way of life and of sustainable development. Many organizations and communities are finding that there are a variety of interrelated ways to utilize the Earth Charter and to implement its values. The Earth Charter can be used as:

an educational tool for developing understanding of the critical choices facing humanity and the urgent need for commitment to a sustainable way of life
an invitation to individuals, institutions, and communities for internal reflection on fundamental attitudes and ethical values governing behavior

a catalyst for multi-sectoral, cross-cultural, and interfaith dialogue on global ethics and the direction of globalization

a call to action and guide to a sustainable way of life that can inspire commitment, cooperation, and change

an integrated ethical framework for creating sustainable development policies and plans at all levels

a values framework for assessing progress towards sustainability and for designing professional codes of conduct and accountability systems

a soft law instrument that provides an ethical foundation for the ongoing development of environmental and sustainable development law.

For more information see:

Earth Charter website at: www.earthcharter.org

II. ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS 2001/2002

1. Preparation and Dissemination of Materials

Over the next two years, a number of resources will be developed to promote the Earth Charter and to support programs in areas such as education, business and professional accountability, religion and spirituality, media outreach, a culture of peace, and governance. The following materials will be developed or refined and disseminated as appropriate:

1. Earth Charter stationery with matching brochures in English, French and Spanish and related Earth Charter posters.

2. An Earth Charter web site, making available education materials on-line and enabling interactive opportunities such as on-line forums. The Secretariat has been operating an Earth Charter website for several years.

3. A commentary on the Earth Charter that explains the origin and meaning of the ideas and principles set forth in the Earth Charter and that includes a comparison of the Earth Charter with existing international agreements and declarations.

4. Translations of the Earth Charter into all major languages and as many other languages as possible, with a system in place to ensure that translations

are both accurate and well written. To date, the Charter has been translated into a number of languages.

5. A briefing book that provides background on the history, objectives, leaders, sponsors, and projects of the Earth Charter Initiative for use by organizations and the press.

6. A video presenting the people, goals, and projects of the Earth Charter Initiative and explaining its importance.

7. Regular reports on The Earth Charter in Action, summarizing the accomplishments of national activities worldwide and the uses of the Earth Charter in local communities and different sectors.

8. A book of essays on the legal, scientific, ethical, religious, and other foundations of the Earth Charter. The authors will reflect diverse cultural perspectives and represent key sectors. It will include a comprehensive bibliography of sources relevant to the development of the Earth Charter.

9. A series of interviews will be processed for publication as "Global Proposals for the Third Millennium". This will bring together the views of key leaders with regards to the Earth Charter Initiative and related movements.

10. An Earth Charter bibliography computer program with which students can easily conduct research on the Earth Charter and related materials. This program will be available through the Earth Charter web site.

11. A glossary of terms found in the Earth Charter and related international documents.

2. Education

The Earth Charter is a valuable and timely educational resource and the Earth Charter Initiative is giving top priority to its Education Program. A range of educational materials for all ages will be developed and disseminated in order to promote understanding of fundamental challenges and choices, the values and principles contained in the Earth Charter, and how the Earth Charter can be used to help bring about the transformations necessary to attain a more sustainable way of living. Teachers and educational administrators at all levels will be provided opportunities to learn how to utilize these materials and to train others. A special advisory committee on education has been created.

a) Primary and Secondary School

Curriculum materials, classroom work sheets, and teacher training resources are being developed. In partnership with education organizations, these

materials will be disseminated widely. As a first step, an "Earth Charter Resource Booklet for Children's Education" will be completed and published. Earth Charter curricula for children and youth have already been developed and utilized in Costa Rica, Australia, and Italy, and these materials will serve as a resource for the proposed booklet.

b) Higher Education Resources for college-level curricula on the Earth Charter will be developed and disseminated. Courses related to the Earth Charter and sustainable development are being prepared by University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, working with UNESCO and drawing upon material currently under development by various education partners, including the National University of Costa Rica, Australian National University, and Hendrix College in Arkansas.

c) Informal Education and Lifelong Learning

An Earth Charter Facilitator's Kit, which is designed to assist individuals in conducting workshops on the Earth Charter in NGOs, faith communities, and other organizations, will be completed and distributed.

3. Business and Civil Society

Increasing numbers of people and organizations are embracing the Earth Charter as a guide and accountability framework. Endorsements and sector appropriate implementation plans will be pursued in a variety of areas including the following.

a) Business and Professional Accountability

This program will promote use of the Earth Charter by businesses and professions. One aim is to encourage professional groups to revise their codes of conduct to better reflect the values and principles of the Earth Charter, as exemplified by the World Federation of Engineering Organizations. Another aim is to promote the Earth Charter as a values framework that can be used to develop a sound ethic of social and ecological responsibility in the business community. In this regard, the Earth Charter principles are directly relevant to current debates about global capitalism and the impact of trade on local communities and the environment.

The formation of a business advisory committee is under consideration. Ways to use Earth Charter principles to promote sustainability certification and labeling and programs for ecologically and socially responsible investing are being explored in Australia and the United States.

b) Religion and Spirituality

The Earth Charter recognizes the powerful influence that spiritual values and organized religion may have on the ethical values and way of life of individuals and communities. The religions are in a position to play a major role in the shift to a sustainable future, and a significant number of religious leaders in all traditions are beginning to speak out and to provide support. Recognizing the importance of religious leadership, the Earth Charter Initiative

has endeavored to engage religious and spiritual groups in the worldwide dialogue on global ethics that contributed to the drafting of the Earth Charter. For example, the Earth Charter was featured in a series of Harvard University Conferences on Religion and Ecology that brought together scholars and religious leaders from many cultures and nations. It was presented and received considerable support at the Parliament of the World's Religions in South Africa in 1999, and the Parliament is using the Earth Charter in its new programs.

The Earth Charter was introduced as a declaration of widely shared values at the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations in 2000, and many Earth Charter values were incorporated in the Declaration issued by the Summit. It is presently being disseminated by many groups including The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the Foundation for Ethics and Meaning, Global Education Associates, the Millennium Institute, Sarvodaya Shramadana Sangamaya, Soka Gakkai International, the World Council of Churches, and other spiritual and religious groups seeking to cooperate in the development of global ethics while remaining true to their unique traditions.

The program on Religion and Spirituality will continue to encourage use of the Earth Charter in interfaith dialogues on shared values and will promote the incorporation of Earth Charter values into the teaching of spiritual and religious groups. The Earth Charter can be used to advance participation by the religions in the global partnership for a just, sustainable, and peaceful future. A special Earth Charter advisory committee on religion and spirituality has been created.

c) Youth

Youth are an integral part of the Earth Charter process. Agenda 21 and Principle 12.c of the Earth Charter call for special attention to youth. While much of the Initiative's education material targets youth, participation of this major group will be further facilitated through: a) partnerships with major youth networks to encourage use of the Earth Charter in their work as active agents of change; and b) holding Youth Earth Charter forums and workshops. The first of these will be organized in collaboration with the Earth Charter Central Asian Council in Uzbekistan. In addition, Green Cross International will hold an international Earth Charter Youth Contest, and Youth Employment Services will utilize the Earth Charter in their activities.

d) Indigenous Peoples

Over the past two decades, indigenous peoples have been an increasingly influential voice in international discussions of environmental protection and sustainable development. The Earth Charter Initiative has worked closely with a number of indigenous peoples' groups, including the Indigenous Peoples Program at the Earth Council, the Indigenous Peoples' Consultative Council, the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, and the Russian Association of the Indigenous Peoples of the North (RAIPON). Earth Charter Principle 12 gives special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples in connection with environmental justice issues. The Initiative will, therefore, continue to

collaborate with indigenous peoples' groups in its efforts to help build a global partnership in support of a just and sustainable world.

4. Media

The Earth Charter media program is designed to generate media interest in the Earth Charter and related activities and to increase coverage of Earth Charter events in the press and on television and radio. As part of this effort, the Initiative has been using the services of Ruder Finn, an international public relations firm.

The Initiative will also be working with other public relations and media specialists in Latin America, Australia, Russia and elsewhere in an effort to conduct a number of major media events over the next year and a half leading up to the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. These events will involve world leaders and major performing artists and will endeavour to significantly expand the involvement of people in the Earth Charter Initiative. Each of these events will have an educational and endorsement component.

5. Government

The focus of this program is promotion of the Earth Charter as a values framework and soft law instrument that can serve as a guide for sustainability planning and assessment at the local, national, and international governmental levels.

a) Local

In partnership with The International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Earth Charter Secretariat together with the 53 Earth Charter National Committees and coordinators will assist local governments with the incorporation of the Earth Charter into their educational systems and development planning processes. The tenth World Congress of Local Governments, which was organized by ICLEI and met in Germany in July 2000, endorsed the Earth Charter and committed the members of ICLEI to apply the principles of the Earth Charter in their policies and programs. The municipality of San José, Costa Rica, has taken the lead in implementing an Earth Charter-based training program for municipal workers.

b) National

In collaboration with National Councils for Sustainable Development (NCSDs), the Initiative will promote the integration of Earth Charter values into policy making, planning, legislation, and assessment of progress towards sustainability. NCSDs are multi-stakeholder mechanisms for the promotion and implementation of sustainability plans as recommended in Chapter 38 of Agenda 21.

In the Rio+10 Assessment being prepared by NCSDs, which is being coordinated by the Earth Council in preparation for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Earth Charter will be utilized to evaluate

progress toward achieving sustainable patterns of development. The Earth Charter will be especially helpful in assessing 1) the extent to which national and local sustainable development strategies or development plans reflect an integrated vision of sustainability, and 2) the extent to which education systems are addressing the major challenges of sustainable development.

Certain nations have taken the lead in involving many sectors and stakeholders in utilizing the Earth Charter as a comprehensive framework for development. The Republic of Tatarstan in Russia has undertaken a comprehensive review of the extent to which its national policies and practices conform with Earth Charter principles and of how to improve its compliance. Costa Rica has been at the forefront of promoting peace, democracy, and sustainable development, and these efforts increasingly utilize the Earth Charter as an integrated ethical framework. The Philippines, the Netherlands, Australia, and Brazil are also engaged in significant cross-sectoral and governmental use of the Earth Charter. These major national efforts serve as experimental undertakings that are exploring how the Earth Charter can be used as a values framework for building just, sustainable, and peaceful societies. This program seeks to study, document, and support the full implementation of the Earth Charter in these and other territories.

Commission members and other Earth Charter representatives will continue to present the Earth Charter to heads of State seeking their endorsement and support, accompanied by appropriate ceremonies, seminars and/or public meetings, and media exposure.

c) International

Working with The World Conservation Union (IUCN), the Earth Charter Initiative will promote the adoption of the Union's Draft International Covenant on Environment and Development as a hard law treaty that is designed to achieve implementation of many Earth Charter values.

Briefing sessions on the Earth Charter Initiative will be conducted for diplomatic missions at the United Nations in New York and Geneva. In partnership with Earth Charter National Committees and NCSDs, the Initiative will organize a global Earth Charter Assembly preceding the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development to help generate a critical mass of support for endorsement of the Earth Charter by the United Nations General Assembly.

6. Multistakeholder Collaboration for a Culture of Peace

The goal of this program is to use the Earth Charter to help prevent violence and war and to build societies that practice tolerance, solidarity, and cooperation.

The Earth Charter Initiative has been collaborating with a range of UN-related "Culture of Peace" initiatives. The next ten years is the official decade of a Culture of Peace in the UN system. The 16th and culminating major principle of the Earth Charter states, "Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace". A culture of peace, in its deepest sense, is the outcome of implementing all of the Earth Charter principles. This program area seeks to strengthen and study a range of education and development program where

the pursuit of peace, democracy, and sustainable development is being significantly guided by Earth Charter principles.

As mentioned above, both the Republic of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation and Costa Rica have taken the lead in pursuing a culture of peace guided by the Earth Charter principles. This program area will pursue a series of curriculum development initiatives and national projects bringing together these two agendas. As part of this program, a peace conference will be conducted that brings together representatives of Tatarstan with the aim of declaring this region "a zone of the culture of peace." Guided by the Earth Charter vision, this work will be undertaken in collaboration with Green Cross International, the UNESCO Culture for Peace Process, The Hague Appeal for Peace, and the World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders. In addition, the Earth Charter Initiative will also collaborate with the UN University for Peace to develop educational programs and projects that utilize the Earth Charter and Culture of Peace manifesto to show how these declarations can be used to promote education for sustainability and national strategies for sustainable development.

7. Earth Charter Endorsements

The Earth Charter Initiative encourages the endorsement of the Charter as well as its use and implementation. Endorsement of the Earth Charter by individuals or organizations signifies a commitment to the spirit and aims of the document. It is an indication that they intend to utilize the Earth Charter in ways that are appropriate given their situation. For example, an organization might use the document to review its operations and modify its activities so that they better reflect the principles of the Earth Charter, and it might integrate the Earth Charter into its educational programs. Endorsement also means a readiness to cooperate with others in the effort to implement Earth Charter values. There are many other ways that those who endorse the Earth Charter can help to advance the objectives of the Initiative.

Many groups and organizations have endorsed and are making use of the Earth Charter. Endorsements build support for the Earth Charter movement and social change. A growing number of endorsements increases the possibility that the United Nations General Assembly will endorse the Earth Charter in 2002.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

An Earth Charter Commission was established in early 1997 to oversee the consultation and drafting process and to approve a final version of the Charter, which was released in March 2000, following a Commission meeting in Paris at the UNESCO headquarters. The Commission will meet infrequently in the future and only when decisions are necessary concerning major changes in the goals and governance of the Earth Charter Initiative. Oversight of the operations and programs of the Earth Charter Initiative is the responsibility of the Earth Charter Steering Committee, which is chaired by members of the Commission.

The Earth Charter International Secretariat is based at the Earth Council on the campus of the University for Peace in San José, Costa Rica. The Secretariat, which includes an executive director, two staff, and volunteers, provides support for the Commission and Steering Committee, coordinates major programs and global undertakings, and works with a global network of 53 Earth Charter National Committees and coordinators, and a number of partner organizations, including National Councils for Sustainable Development. Several members of the international drafting committee continue to assist the Secretariat with planning and the preparation of translations and background materials on the Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter National Committees are composed of a broad range of community, educational, business, and government representatives. In some countries, National Councils of Sustainable Development (NCSDs) serve as the Earth Charter National Committee. In other cases, there is a single person or organization that is the Earth Charter coordinator for that country. The Secretariat receives support for its activities with National Committees from the Earth Council staff working with NCSDs.

The following organizations have made a major long-term commitment to working with the Earth Charter Initiative:
the Earth Council; Green Cross International; the Foundation for the Survival and Development of Humanity; the Center for Respect of Life and Environment; the Center for Dignity and Rights/Cedar International; the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives; the Paulo Freire Institute; the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future; Global Education Associates; and the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

The Secretariat, National Committees and coordinators, NCSDs, and committed organizations work together to disseminate and promote the Earth Charter at the national level. A wide variety of Earth Charter activities are organized independently by diverse groups at the local level. Grants and gifts in support of the Earth Charter Initiative are made to The Philanthropic Collaborative (TPC)/Earth Charter Fund in New York City. TPC is an innovative 501(c)(3) public charity that was created by the Rockefeller family and is used by diverse groups.

It operates like a community foundation and includes within it many donor-advised funds and a variety of special projects. The TPC/Earth Charter Fund provides funding for the international Secretariat, National Committees and coordinators, and collaborating organizations responsible for managing Earth Charter projects. It operates under the oversight of the Earth Charter Steering Committee.