

The Earth Charter

PREAMBLE

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Earth, Our Home

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

The Global Situation

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous—but not inevitable.

The Challenges Ahead

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

Universal Responsibility

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

The Action Guidelines

1. ***Start with the Earth Charter.*** Let the Earth Charter be your basic guide when you are planning and undertaking activities to make the Earth Charter vision a reality.
2. ***Be a Living Example.*** Strive to be a living example of the spirit of the Earth Charter in your day-to-day life – at home, in the work place, and in your community.
3. ***Empower Yourself.*** Act boldly, and trust that you can make a difference as an individual and that your activities will catalyze the efforts of many others.
4. ***Cooperate, Cooperate.*** Create the power to affect change by building partnerships and collaborating with others, and seek win/win solutions.
5. ***Empower Others.*** Share power by being inclusive and providing others with opportunities to strengthen their capacities for problem solving, decision-making, and leadership, unleashing human creativity.
6. ***Promote Respect and Understanding.*** Endeavor to build relationships of mutual respect and trust among individuals and groups from diverse cultures and communities, and resolve differences through dialogue in a way that produces learning and growth.
7. ***Facilitate Self-Organization.*** Facilitate the spread of initiatives inspired by the Earth Charter without trying to control them, counting on the capacity of human groups with a clear ethical purpose to self-organize and achieve positive outcomes.
8. ***Focus on Root Causes.*** Focus thought and action on the root causes of the major problems and challenges facing humanity, and do not let the pressures of existing unsustainable systems and practices deter you from action.
9. ***Be Committed Yet Flexible.*** Be unwavering in your commitment to fundamental principles and ensure that the means adopted to achieve your goals are consistent with Earth Charter values, but always be flexible and innovative in selecting means and methods as circumstances change.
10. ***Be Resourceful.*** Do not let your thinking and acting be restricted by dependence on money; use your imagination and be resourceful in making things happen.
11. ***Use Technology Wisely.*** Be mindful that large numbers of people do not have access to advanced technology, and when constructing technological solutions to problems ensure that they are appropriate.
12. ***Protect the Integrity of the Charter.*** When presenting, quoting from, or translating the Earth Charter be faithful to the words and spirit of the original text, and link the Charter only with organizations, products and events that are consistent with its values and vision.