

AN EARTH CHARTER – A SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE RENEWAL OF EARTH (ICRE)

PREAMBLE

I am because we are.

We have forgotten who we are
We have lost our sense of wonder
We have degraded the Earth
We have exploited our fellow creatures

And we have nowhere else to go.

In our ignorance we have disrupted the balance of life. Now the air we breathe hurts us and the water we drink poisons us.

All things are bound together:

If we lose the sweetness of the waters,
we lose the life of the land;
If we lose the life of the land,
we lose the majesty of the forest;
If we lose the majesty of the forest,
we lose the purity of the air;
If we lose the purity of the air,
we lose the creatures of the Earth;

Not just for ourselves but for
our children – now and in the future.

But a new spirit is being born, a new awareness of
our place in this delicate balance. This spirit calls us to:

- a transformation of our hearts and minds
- concrete changes in our way of life
- the renewal of our religions
- the creation of a global society

Today:

We remember who we are
We reclaim our sense of wonder
We acknowledge our responsibility
We commit ourselves to the Earth

We turn toward each other in friendship
We turn again together towards home.

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES

INTERDEPENDENCE

The Earth is an interdependent community of life. All parts of this system are interconnected and essential to the functioning of the whole.

THE VALUE OF LIFE

Life is sacred. Each of the diverse forms of life has its own intrinsic value.

BEAUTY

Earth and all forms of life embody beauty. The beauty of the Earth is food for the human spirit. It inspires human consciousness with wonder, joy and creativity.

HUMILITY

Human Beings are not outside or above the community of life. We have not woven the web of life; we are but a strand within it. We depend on the whole for our very existence.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Human beings have a special capacity to affect the ecological balance. In awareness of the consequences of each action, we have a special responsibility to preserve life in its integrity and diversity and to avoid destruction and waste for trivial or merely utilitarian purposes.

RIGHTS

Every human being has the right to a healthy environment. We must grant this right to others: both those living today and the generations to come.

ETHICS FOR LIVING

SUSTAINABLY

Human Beings must live in a way that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

JUSTLY

SUFFICIENTLY

In a world of great disparities between rich and poor, justice demands that every human being be able to obtain the basic needs of life.

IN PARTICIPATION

Justice demands universal participation in all aspects of a sustainable society through legal and institutional structures.

IN SOLIDARITY

Sustainability with justice will only be achieved through an ethic of global solidarity, which includes the rights of future generations.

PEACEFULLY

The sacredness of life demands the practice of non-violence; differences must be resolved by consultation rather than conflict. War and the production of weapons destroy the environment as well as human life.

SIMPLY

To establish economic justice, people in the industrialized world must learn to live more frugally. Simplicity of life fosters both inner freedom and outer sustainability.

KNOWLEDGEABLY

Environmental education and free access to information are essential for global awareness and skilful care of the Earth.

HOLISTICALLY

Human life, to be fully human, must include physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development within the community of all life.

PROGRAMME AREAS

Our concern for all life expresses itself not only in our prayers and in statements of principles, but in actions in our personal, professional and political lives. We, representatives of the world's religious communities, recommend action in the following programme areas. We also call on our members to develop actions around these areas, and to promote and implement them in their personal and professional lives.

LOCAL AND INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

1. EDUCATION

The promotion of environmental education as an integral and compulsory part of school curricula.

2. HEALTH

The promotion of environmental education as a mandatory component of all health care, both in medical schools and in medical practice.

3. FOOD PRODUCTION

The promotion of sustainable farming systems as the basis of all agricultural food production, including the preservation and integration of indigenous methods and indigenous foods.

4. FOOD CONSUMPTION

The promotion of food consumption that is lower on the food chain (less energy consuming), as well as food that is organically, humanely and locally produced.

5. ENERGY

The promotion of sustainable patterns of energy consumption through net reduction, increased efficiency and minimal use of fossil fuels.

6. TRANSPORT

The promotion of transport forms that are less energy consuming and less polluting.

7. WILDLIFE

The protection and, where necessary, the restoration of biological diversity, and the revival of the traditional peaceful co-existence between people and wild animals.

8. FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

The promotion of the “extended family” or similar forms of community as the basic unit for integrated and environmentally balanced living.

9. POPULATION

The promotion of population education toward the reduction of birth rates, and the related appreciation of economic and social factors.

10. GRASSROOT MOVEMENTS

The promotion of grassroots movements to protect the environment from vested interest of all kinds (i.e. the Chipko Movement in India).

11. RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

The promotion of religious traditions and practices that foster concern and responsibility for the environment, and the challenging of those that do not. This would include the protection and restoration of many of the indigenous values and practices which have a particular contribution to make in this area.

12. REGIONAL POLICIES

The promotion of regional policies and legislation that would consider not only local effects, but also the impact on the rest of the world.

13. LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The development of local government policies and structures for the promotion of the above programmes.

International Level

1. INTERNATIONAL WEALTH

The redistribution of land, wealth, and natural resources for the good of many. This would require a restructuring of the present economic system that would include the promotion of “quality of life indicators”, rather than simply measures of quantity, and address the issue of debt and world trade agreements.

2. A TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH

The establishment of procedures and mechanisms that would permit a transnational approach to environmental issues and disputes, including standards, accountability and enforcement.

3. TRANSNATIONAL SHARING

The promotion of appropriate technology exchange: new technology from the industrialized countries and indigenous technology from the poorer nations.

4. FINANCES

The creation of a “world fund” for the protection of the environment: money to be raised through projects like “energy taxation”, an “Earth stamp”, etc.

5. TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

The limitation of power of transnational corporations, as well as the encouragement of their enormous ability to foster justice and sustainability.

6. MILITARIZATION

The protection of complete disarmament, the termination of all weapon production and trade, and the ending of all military technology transfer.

7. SCIENCE

The encouragement of scientists to be environmentally responsible and to use their knowledge and skills to help alleviate environmental problems.

8. MEDIA

The promotion of mass / electronic media for the development of ecological attitudes, values and skills.

9. WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The promotion of full and equal participation of women in all government and non-governmental organizations, in decision-making, implementation, administration and funding at international, national and community levels. The protection of women and children as the most vulnerable to environmental and economic injustice.

10. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The support of Indigenous Peoples in their efforts to protect their natural environments, and the recognition of the special contribution of Indigenous Peoples in providing vital wisdom and leadership in resisting the forces that are destroying the earth.

11. BIOTECHNOLOGY

Contribution to the ethical process involved in the development and application of biotechnology and genetic engineering.

12. WILDERNESS

The promotion of protection of remaining habitat (forests, wetlands, rivers, estuaries, etc.) through wilderness preservation and sustainable life practices.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE EARTH

P.O. Box 194
Cross River, N.Y. 10518
Tel. & Fax: (914) 977 3097

This document is the distillation of a series of consultations held throughout the world, organized by the International Communities for the Renewal of the Earth (ICRE), formerly the International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth (ICCRE), to elicit contributions from religions of the world, toward the creation of an Earth Charter. Participating organizations were, among others, Religions for Peace (WCRP), the Temple of Understanding, the World Council of Churches, the Green Belt Movement of Kenya, the National Episcopal Conference, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders for Human Survival.

Meetings took place in North America, Europe, Asia, The Philippines, and Africa, each producing its own charter. This final document was offered during the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, June 1992) for the purpose of influencing the Earth Charter agenda of the conference. It will also stand on its own right as an interfaith perspective on the crisis we face and the future we must create.