

## **The Role of the Earth Council in the Earth Charter**

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First I would like to honour the indigenous people who have given us space and welcomed us to their country. It is customary for us in the Third World to do that.

What I will dwell on in discussing the role of the Earth Council in the Earth Charter process is perhaps to go deeper into what the Earth Charter process is about. Other speakers have given you a broad sweep, while Steven has given you a very detailed presentation of one of the processes of the Earth Charter. There are two processes involved and I would like to go deeper into the other one.

You have heard all the details of the drafting process and all the ramifications of language. Steven has gone through that very thoroughly, meticulously and professionally. What I would like to talk about is this: we wanted to create an Earth Charter that belonged to the people - one that the people contributed to and had access to. The document is not the end, but only the beginning of that process. We call that the valuing and differentiation process. The purpose, as I indicated earlier, is so that people can own it and say, "I contributed to that" - not expert groups and UN bureaucrats, but ordinary people. Therefore, people can relate to it in terms of their own personal behaviour and in terms of the social organisations they belong to and the political regimes they support.

I will give you some of the major processes that the Earth Council is helping to facilitate in the deepening of this valuing process. For the Earth Charter to be authentic, it must address the wishes of the people. "Will it help me in my poverty?" "Will it help give me clean water?" "Will it help to give me peace in my community or my village?" "Will it help commit me more to my fellows and to the Earth?"

Unless we can answer "yes" to these questions, then we are wasting our time. You cannot go to a village and say "Hey, look at this beautiful document", but not be able to answer the question "What can it do for the people's situation?"

Whether we are North or South, we have to face the realities of the situation. It is very interesting to note that when the UNDP Development Report was quoted in the New York Times and CNN. It was called "Kofi's Facts", the UN Secretary-General's, little footnotes, such as: "80 per cent of all consumption is done by the top fifth of humanity, and only 1.3 per cent is consumed by the lower fifth of humanity"; "Expenditure on cosmetics in the United States is \$2 billion more than what would be needed to feed the poor with basic necessities"; and "Europeans spend \$17 billion on their pets - \$4 billion more than what is needed to ensure the nutrition and health care of all the people's of the world".

If we are really serious about taking responsibility for the Earth and its people, then these are serious matters. Unless we can say that we are serious about this focus on village

level, then the Earth Charter cannot be a People's Charter. We can have the major forces of globalisation and some universal values, but unless we are able to localise them so that local sustainability can make local communities viable, then globalisation cannot be viable at the same time. You cannot have a healthy organism with sick cells - it is a contradiction in terms. So that is what is important to address - the needs of 70 per cent of the human family, who live in this situation.

Secondly, in the process we must acknowledge - as was brought up earlier in this forum - that differentiation is reality. We must accept that there are differences in belief systems, in world views, in cultural practices, and even in morality of the Earth's people. This is part of the reality and also part of the resources of the human family.

The main task is that from these differences we must create common responsibilities and common cooperation. The question was raised: "What will we do if we have several countries that have their own national charters?" To me this is a necessary step. A principle that we have learned in this process in more than 35 countries is that we must affirm, acknowledge and respect the identities of different people. We must respect their cultural and spiritual identity and thereby encourage them to use the charter draft to elicit their own values that reinforce this identity. Because without respect you cannot have cooperation. Unless we first show them that we affirm who they are, and therefore their right to be able to express this in terms that have meaning for them, then we cannot contribute to a global, universal responsibility.

This is fundamental. So we encourage groups and countries to have their own personal charter or national charter. But we have to move them all into common values - what can they contribute to the universal responsibility for taking care of the global family and the global life process of the Earth? It has to be in this form. Respect and empowerment are necessary to be able to move from competition and conflict to cooperation.

The third element of the valuing process is this: what happens after the Charter is adopted? The valuing process of the Earth Charter principles cannot be meaningful or effective unless they are translated in at least four basic areas with the valuing process targets. One is that they be internalised by the person in terms of personal values. You can read these beautiful words, but unless they mean something to you and unless they affect your behaviour, they really don't bring change. This requires a different process. This requires some kind of reflection, silencing, meditation and a process of internalisation. This is part of the valuing process.

Also, the Earth Charter process must translate into work ethics, into our educational system and into religious teaching. The processes need to work out how the doctors, the lawyers and other professions can put this principle into their codes of conduct. There is a representative here of the World Organisation of Engineers and they have gone a long way towards adopting some of these principles into their own code of ethics. In the UK there is a move to have part of these principles as part of the Hippocratic oath of doctors so that it becomes part of their work ethic. Unless it is translated into this form, it really will not take on any effective meaning.

In Mexico the government has legislated that the Earth Charter principles be part of the secondary educational curriculum of the country. The Greek Orthodox Church of Russia has adopted a very stern position with regard to ecological destruction, naming it an ecological sin. This is operational and it has practical meaning.

In the political level, we are saying before it even gets debated in the intergovernmental process of the UN - there is a joke that if you put the 10 commandments into that process, all of them would be in brackets! - there is a need for these principles to form part of the national Agenda 21 of each country. Any negotiation in the UN would benefit from endorsement of countries that had accepted the principles. This is what the Earth Council is trying to do in 56 countries, where it is working with national councils - to put this on the table as an ethical framework for their national plan. When we bring it up at the higher level of international politics at the UN, this is part of the stepping stone towards that debate.

The process of drafting a charter cannot stand alone. It has to come with different mechanisms; it has to come with legislation - not only at the UN level, but in terms of translating it into national and community laws. This is one of the areas that the Earth Charter Council is working on. We are working with parliamentarians from all over Latin America to look at a sustainable development legislative agenda that will create a legal framework based on the Earth Charter principles. The Earth Council has initiated an Ombudsman function for sustainable development. We have to be able to gather together different disciplines that bridge the different value spheres in a knowledge resource facility where people can get access to them. What we are really bridging here are not only generations but also paradigms. We are bridging different kinds of world views and this is really the hard part. How do you get them together so that each value sphere - of economics, sociology, religion - can come together and work out a common ethical framework for the future of humanity,

So this is the process to make this more meaningful and it is happening very much in all countries, especially in Latin America and Central Europe where it has become a movement - a movement that seems to offer a promise and a political alternative to neo-liberal capitalism and the centralised socialist ideology. The people are taking on a notion that is, perhaps, grounded in their own cultural and spiritual values and is, at the same time, focused on sustainable development.

Steven tried to describe the dynamics of what he saw in Mato Grosso. But this took one year of basic national consultation processes, where people brought out their old values, and their longing for an alternative to address the issues of poverty and deprivation. That is why when Brendan was able finally to put the views of this group together, I came with much excitement to join in this process. I remember some years ago, at a World Fair in Melbourne, hearing about the 40,000 years or more of Dreamtime that your Aboriginal people had at Ayers Rock. That was very moving. At that fair there was a diorama in holographic form, and it brought together the promise of integrating your very rich mythological heritage, where energy lies in terms of visions, values, and your entrepreneurial zeal for development. That was the promise of your Australia at that time.

That to me is a very exciting contribution to the global movement of the various disciplines all over the world. For what we are crafting is really a common consciousness, a global mind. We are crafting a common kind of value for a global society. But most of all, it is really the crafting of a global soul, and you have a lot to contribute to that. I am very pleased to be with you today, representing the Earth Council in this process.

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## DISCUSSION

**CHRIS TIPLER** (The Collins Hill Group Pty Ltd): I actually come from the world of business - I am a strategic adviser; the role of my firm is to advise corporations and government bodies on strategy. I would like to address the question of translation - how you translate principles into outcomes. Most businesses have charters and they call those charters strategic plans. Those plans have mission statements, goals, strategies, and most of those plans don't work. So many corporations today are questioning the value of the planning process because it does not generate any outcomes. The intelligent question to ask is: How do we move out of the field of slogans into the field of action? So many of the plans that you see are nothing more than slogans or simply statements of what we would like to see, but they have no sense of movement in them.

In that context, in social life - including that of this country - there are many examples of where the things that we say are fundamentally inconsistent with the things that we do. That is similar to corporate behaviour. For example, in this country we talk about social justice but we constantly reduce the budgets in relation to aged care, health and so on. In education you will find in almost every school a mission statement about the need for a comprehensive education with broad values, and yet we overwhelmingly focus on a narrow academic curriculum, because that is what the community or the economy demands. In the corporate world we get major companies like BHP, who talk the language of environment in all their annual reports, but the reality is they are in the process of trashing Ok Tedi in New Guinea - an appalling environmental catastrophe for that country.

When I look at the Charter in its current form, I see essentially a lot of slogans. I am not criticising what is there, because as far as it goes, I like it, it gives me a good, warm feeling. But of the 45 sub-principles you have there, only a handful really have any sense of movement in them. Most of them are simply slogans. As a corporate adviser, if I were advising you, I would say to you that I like the Charter, but would you please try to build in a stronger sense of movement to make something happen, instead of just assuming that it will happen in some downstream process over which you have no control.

In summary I would say: the risk is that we will dance to Armageddon all the time talking the language of sustainable development while we are going down the gurgler. That is what we have to avoid.

A couple of examples of the sorts of things that engender movement which I can think of are: in the corporate world measurement is critical. People do what they are measured on. If I say to you "do X", but I measure you on Y, then you will do Y. So it is critical that this document build in as much as possible a sense of what will be measured and how it will be measured. I do not see much of that at the moment.

A second issue related to this is the question of transparency. It was touched on by Professor Rockefeller. I think that is absolutely critical and I think the document could be strengthened very greatly in the area of making the dissemination of information mandatory across all levels of government and across all corporations. In this country right now, particularly in the State where I live, we are facing real pressure on freedom of information. It is harder and harder to get information from government about fundamental government processes. That is the very opposite of what we need. In the world of corporations, they basically do what the investment institutions tell them. BHP listens to the investment companies. Yet there is nothing in the Charter, for example, as to how we might influence corporate behaviour by putting enormous pressure on those people who control the purse strings of investment. What charter are they working to? When they invest are they working ethically? Do we require them to work ethically?

I would pick up two more points. First, education: it seems to me that the education agendas, the curricula, are really critical to the future. I thought the Charter should be more prescriptive about what it believes education should be. Secondly, the control of the media: in my view the media in this country is almost out of control. It reinforces very destructive values associated with materialism; it reinforces very little that has to do with care and consideration and genuine compassion for others.

Finally, I want to touch on the question of regulation and punishment. There is very little in the Charter at the moment about the fact that if you do wrong you go to gaol. In any sane system there has to be appropriate emphasis on punishing what is inappropriate and anti-social. In summary, I think what you are doing is wonderful; I think that real intelligence is being applied to the principles that are there, but I think what is missing is a sense of movement.

**MAXIMO KALAW:** Thank you, that is precisely the crux of the matter - how do we bridge the various incongruences, from personal morality to systems morality. What people hold as their moral values does not get translated to the system of labour laws, and fair practices. It is not just because these are just slogans, but they have not moved on to the operational terms. First, there has to be an understanding of the larger process and the larger picture. Even in business the whole issue of value stream management can be expanded so that the value stream is really congruent with the value stream of the market, the community and its eco-system, because that is what sustains the business. But we have not done that yet.

It is very important that we do not just consult, but we go through the process of the praxis. This is where the movement starts. The movement is starting in local communities

and in a very few enlightened business and professional groups, like the engineers. This is what is needed and this is what we hope to target.

The draft is a state of play, but it needs to be translated into operational terms and then it becomes a movement, both on the corporate and professional side and on the educational side. I think we are getting there, and that is what distinguishes this effort of the Earth Charter from the previous work of just drafting. What is supposed to be well thought-out sometimes turns out to be just a slogan and people cannot connect with it. You have put your finger on the problem.

**STEVEN ROCKEFELLER:** Could I just add one comment to that? There is a plan to develop goals and measures for each principle. What we would like to do is have an accompanying document that lists four, five, or 10 goals that communities could pursue if they wanted to implement these principles. Then there would be measures that they could use to determine whether these goals had been reached. That is something that has not yet been developed, but when the document reaches a high level of maturity, we need to sit down and work that out very specifically. Thank you for your comments.

**IAN BROWN** (Australian Committee for IUCN): You talked about principles, sub-principles, and the hierarchy of the document. But there is within the principles also a hierarchy. Some of them are to do with broad matters such as the sustainability of life on Earth, and some are to do with those processes that might lead us towards this sustainability. Some of them in fact are quite precise - prescriptions almost - for those things that might assist the processes of achieving sustainability. I am thinking here of Principle 9, which is the promotion of gender equality. This, in itself, is obviously a very significant, fundamental and important part of human society. Its relationship to the environment, presumably, is that this is one of the mechanisms that will enable the process of sustainability to be achieved; the process of sustainability is towards maintaining life and the functioning of the Earth's eco-systems. How much tension has there been in the drafting of this document - the hierarchy within the principles themselves and the interrelation between principles? Also, does tension arise from the insertion of social values which are for the common good of humanity and which may not, of themselves, be directly related to sustainability?

**STEVEN ROCKEFELLER:** The assumption is that all the principles are interdependent - that you cannot achieve any of them without working with all of them. In terms of the hierarchy here, there is no question that some principles, like the poverty principle, could be made a sub-principle of the human development principle. It has been pulled out and highlighted because it is such a major issue. If you are looking at the structure of the Charter very logically, this does create some problems. Some of the principles are broad, some are very specifically targeted. I do not know how to get around that. What settles those issues is when you have the abbreviated version of the Charter you have to ask: what has to be there for people to be satisfied? That has been the criterion for keeping gender equality and poverty as main principles. But there is a tension around that problem and if you have some suggestions as to how we can work it out, it would be very helpful.

There are those who would like to eliminate any structure in the principles, who would just like them to be 15 principles - no general principles, no set of 12 that flow from them. That is another way of doing this. But the intention in listing them is not to put v them down as one being more important than the other, but rather to try to create some meaningful way of clustering them and organising them. We are still struggling with that. Right now we have three that are very general and cover the big picture; three that deal with ecosystems and all living beings; then four or five that deal explicitly with sustainable development; then a cluster on governance, education and peace. That is the way it has progressed.

**LEE BELL** (Conservation Council of Western Australia): My question relates to the issue you raised of valuing and divisioning the process for the Earth Charter. My particular interest is how that relates to local communities. Increasingly there is a trend towards a rationalist, scientific interpretation of environmental problems and issues. One I am familiar with is contaminated sites. The way that governments look at those sorts of issues is to basically summarise the situation in terms of dollars and cut-off levels for what is acceptable and what is not in this Western scientific, rationalist paradigm. How can we use the Earth Charter, through its drafting process or in a soft law form, to bring some sense of humanity to the way governments look at environmental issues and to address the more holistic part of the problem, which is not just the scientific rationalist basis of looking at it, but the wider one of human rights and human empowerment in the face of those environment problems?

**MAXIMO KALAW:** The experience we had in working with communities is really not to get stuck with what the government says. It is a people's process, although the government is invited to participate in that process. To give you an example of a process we conducted in the Philippines: we conduct a council for everyone from the communities, for indigenous people and for politicians. They can say anything. You would be surprised how the politicians felt about this after speaking at these gatherings - they did not realise there was so much grief until the people were allowed to talk this way and the community came together in that kind of cooperation. It is about respect and about going deeper into the psyche of the community, into the deeper sources of its energy. For the first time, the value of the self, and its resources - both cultural and ethnic - are available for helping the community come together.

**FAYEN d'EVIE** (Earth Charter Youth Project Officer): Both you and Maurice have talked this morning about part of the validity of the Earth Charter coming from the process itself and from it being a people's charter. What happens once that process has gone on and there has been a global consensus about an Earth Charter? How do you make sure that the Earth Charter remains dynamic and that there is that commitment from those future generations of people who have not participated in the process?

**MAXIMO KALAW:** There are two things to keep in mind here. The Earth Charter is living document; it is never closed. It is also a transparent document. But at the same time you need the mechanism to translate it; you need a national council to translate it into government policies; you need the professional groups. In some countries we have

organised what we call values circles. There are values facilitators in the lawyers group, the doctors group and so on. These values facilitators organise themselves into what is the equivalent of quality circles, but only looking at assessing their work in terms of values. This is an ongoing support system that analyses how or why things are being implemented in their professions. So designating values facilitators and values circles as support groups have been very helpful in some areas, even in government bureaucracies.