

Oscar Motomura, Brazil. [A thematic essay which speaks to Principle 10 and sustainable business practice](#)

The Earth Charter and the World of Business and Economics



Oscar Motomura is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of the Amana-Key Group, a center for excellence in management, a network of associates with global reach, based in São Paulo, Brazil. The purpose is to serve as a world reference for radical innovation in management that is capable of generating genuine development of people, organizations, communities, and the greater whole. The Amana-Key Group has adopted the Earth Charter as a global reference for its education programs and innovation retreats. Thousands of leaders from corporations and the government take Amana-Key programs every year, where their awareness of global issues affecting all of humanity is expanded along with their understanding the importance of contributing to our collective evolution, through ethical and conscious management practices.

In the process of making things happen that will be the focus of the next phase of the Earth Charter process, we cannot underestimate the strength of the culture of searching for increasing economic results that prevails in the global society today. Competing for economic growth and profits has become a worldwide obsession.

Rigorous application of the Earth Charter principles necessarily presupposes a reinvention of the way we try to generate economic development. Inherent in the vision expressed by the Earth Charter is a reinvention of the whole system, including inoculating it with safeguard mechanisms to make it impossible to distort the reinvented system through manipulation, corruption, and other unethical practices.

Such a complete reinvention will also require a radical change in the culture underlying the prevailing system, including the re-education of leaders, many of whom have been trained to be effective at competing, neutralizing competitors, creating strategies for growth and profits, and lobbying for laws that are favorable to their businesses. They believe that they are doing good and that they are the productive members of society. But to the degree that they ignore the negative by-products of their

actions, they live in a state of illusion. They must be awakened and re-educated along the lines of a broad, new benchmark document like the Earth Charter.

Will this process of awakening people from their illusions and their distorted mental models be an easy task? Of course not. It is entirely possible for many people to go through a well-designed education program and come to a new understanding from a logical point of view, but their core beliefs about life not will change that easily. The real change that is needed entails a fundamental change in consciousness. It is *not* from the mental dimension that principles like those in the Earth Charter will be fully implemented. What is required is a degree of commitment that comes only from spirit.

While those who are successful in the prevailing system may be willing to start playing a new game, with new rules, they have enormous resistance to “letting go” of what they have achieved so far. To truly adopt the principles of the Earth Charter will require a full exercise of the value of detachment.

A new political, economic, business system capable of restoring balance worldwide will be possible if everyone works both for his or her own sake and for the sake of the common good. But the prevailing system is still driven by obsolete theories and beliefs, such as the idea that greed is good, that are still taught, paradoxically, in our schools and reinforced in the daily media.

The Earth Charter was created through an outstanding process involving thousands of people from all nations of the planet. If the next phase of the Earth Charter process is to focus on the reinvention of the larger system, it will require an even better process, now involving billions of people. But involving billions of people in what? What specific “equations” will they have to solve in order to make the necessary reinvention happen? The word “equation” is being used here in the sense of a difficult problem that can only be understood if all its elements are taken into account.¹ The formulation of the “right” equations will be key to this process. Otherwise, the energy and creativity of those billions of people will be wasted in solving “peripheral” issues or in working on symptoms and not on the essential ori-

Principle 10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

gins of the problem. Following are some examples of equations that are strategic in nature and consistent with the idea of reinvention rather than incremental change.

Equation 1: How can the peoples of the planet join forces to ensure the total reinvention of the political-economic-business system, both locally and globally, so that everything is geared toward the common good, toward global well-being?

Equation 2: How can the press and the media help to reveal the flaws in the prevailing system and promote the reinvention of systems from scratch, using the vision embedded in the Earth Charter as the essential platform?

Equation 3: How can the leading educational institutions of the world be involved with the Earth Charter principles and be stimulated to create innovative programs capable of catalyzing effective transformation of senior leaders, not just through the mental dimension, but also through emotion, deep contact with the realities in contrast with reported realities, of the world, and the elevation of consciousness?

Equation 4: How can the peoples of the world join forces for the sake of replacing the prevailing assumption that “greed is good” with a new premise that everyone on the planet should work for his or her own well-being while working at the same time for the well-being of the whole? How can the peoples of the world join forces to make sure that those who have, help the have-nots to ensure one hundred percent inclusion, thus making the concept of the common good tangible with the velocity that is necessary?

Equation 5: How can the intelligentsia of all nations be mobilized to prove to senior leaders in all sectors that such a “utopia” will make business flourish at unprecedented levels, making the “market” tens of times larger and sustainably healthier?

Equation 6: How can the press and the media, together with scientists and the intelligentsia of the world, endorse the importance of a healthy transition – even at a short-term loss – to a new level of global well-being? How can we make this short-term sacrifice an “in” movement, worthy of wide appreciation from all sectors of society?

These are equations specifically formulated for reinventing the system. We need more than mere change. We need a complete turnaround. A radical transformation. We must acknowledge that, globally, we are operating with obsolete structures, systems, and institutions, and that we have learned to live with them, to get by with the distortions. Through that process, we have gradually become more and more distant from the ideal, from perfection. It all happened step by step. With our consent. A concession here. Another there.

One day, a document like the Earth Charter is produced. Not by

corporations. Not by governments. Not by institutions of the political system, the economic system, the financial system, the business system. Not by abstractions that came to life, but by a charter created by the peoples of the planet.

The Earth Charter reveals a vision to all of us. A vision of the ideal, of perfection. Some of us realize how far we have strayed from that ideal. But many of us, trapped in a state of illusion, do not see the problems our political, economic, and business systems have generated. We are blind and insensitive to the reality around us. We live fragmented, virtual lives, conditioned by the system.

For the few who can still see, the responsibility is enormous. They all must go further with visions like the Earth Charter. It is time for action. It is time to make things happen. It is time to do what we need to do – even when what we need to do seems to be an impossible task, like completely reinventing the systems around us. And, on top of that, we do not have much time. Speed is key. And we must act on a worldwide scale.

That’s why we need help. We need billions of people involved in the new phase of the Earth Charter. People from all over the world. From different professions. Not orchestrated through a mechanical, hierarchical process full of rules and controls, but all organized biologically, based on a few universal principles.

The Earth Charter honors the complexity of the planet’s overall situation. The issues that deserve our attention are many if we are to resolve that mega-equation in a systemic way. But, in the next phase of the Earth Charter process, we will have to select a few “acupuncture points” to leverage the process. Chief among those points are the political, economic, and business systems.

Maybe the Earth Charter’s next phase should focus exclusively on that key reinvention. Why? Because as long as individual ambition worldwide is geared toward personal gain, a “little god” is actually driving the process of life – generating the deterioration and the illness of the planet as a whole. As we realize, on the other hand, that our purpose must be the well-being of the whole, the pursuit of the common good without any kind of exclusion, we – as humanity – return to the path of wisdom from which we should not have deviated in the first place. In that sense, the Earth Charter seems to be a tool that the Creator has placed in our hands. Another one. Again. To help all of us. Shall we use this extraordinary opportunity effectively this time? •

Note

1 Formulating equations is the gist of systems change. Equations are the clearest and most encompassing possible statements of all the vital aspects to be addressed in order to make a system advance toward a desirable end state or vision. This kind of definition allows the breaking of the path to a desired state into all of its attributes, components, and general features. Hence the formulation of equations prevents us to leaving out any crucial aspect on the path to a desired end state.