

A Test for the Maturity of Humankind



In 1999, **Sergey Shafarenko** initiated the online discussion of the Earth Charter draft in the Republic of Kazakhstan and lead public discussions of the draft in the

southeast region of Kazakhstan with its capital, Ust-Kamenogorsk. In summer 1999, Dr. Shafarenko represented Kazakhstan at the first Earth Charter hearings in Central Asia and was elected a member of the Central Asian Earth Charter Council. He held national public hearings and consultations in the six major cities of his country. He organized the Earth Charter educational summer camp for high school students and young people. In 2003-2004, the Earth Charter National Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan lead campaigns in support of the Earth Charter, and published brochures, produced T-shirts, held ecological song festivals, and collected thousands of letters in support of the Earth Charter.

In recent decades, civilization's technical progress has surged, and clearly demonstrated human interference in the processes of nature, both at local and global level. Recent research carried out by the World Wildlife Fund confirmed that due to the global climate change, the average temperature on the Earth would rise by 2° Celsius. The warming in the Arctic might be three times higher, ranging from 3.2° Celsius to 6.6° Celsius. A vitally important problem has emerged: how to save

civilization and all the community of life on Earth? Present civilization, like a small child lacking experience and driven by self-interest, can only take and consume the treasures of our planet, and does that just for itself, not caring for nature and destroying the biosphere.

The very home where this child was born and is living now has started to fall apart; this childhood of humanity has lasted too long. It is time to mature beyond simply taking and grabbing without giving something back. The Bible teaches us: "There is the time of gathering stones and the time of throwing away stones" (Ecclesiastes 3:5). It is time to draw lessons from the tragic experience of natural disasters of the recent years. We cannot forget the latest tragedy in the Indian Ocean; it is impossible to violate endlessly the laws of the harmony of nature, as all the processes on this planet are interconnected. We have to build our lives on the principles of beauty and responsibility. The wave of natural disasters will continue to grow if we are not able to make the very model of our civilization more humane with respect to nature, if we do not live in harmony with nature. The most promising international document which can show us the way out of the dark tunnel and which identified the main principles of the life on this planet, is, undoubtedly, the Earth Charter.

For the first time in the history of humankind, an important international document was created and discussed by

the population of the planet at various levels. I believe the approval of this important document should be made urgently and at the highest possible level, by the heads of the states and by the United Nations (UN). The UN has to establish the Department of the Earth Charter to promote and bring to life the principles of the document at the international level.

Some fifteen years ago there was a documentary film about the laws of the rise and fall of the civilizations. After the numerous comparisons of indicators of public life – political, economic and social – only one indicator emerged as essential: the level of humankind's moral and ethical development, which could be considered to be fundamental for the creation of harmonic relations with the surrounding world. These basic ethical principles can be found in the text of the Earth Charter.

The term "sustainable development" has become very popular in recent years. It comprises environmental, social, and economic notions. The term "the biosphere territory" is much wider though. Scientists look at biosphere territories as the model landscapes for the introduction of the long-term, environmentally-oriented way of life and activity that take into consideration economic, social, cultural, and ethnic aspects. However, without a basis of moral and ethical values, these notions are doomed, as only the concept of the noosphere embraces all the ingredients that can bring to life the principle of the



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harmonic, sustainable development of civilization. A group of Russian scientists also organized a seminar, "Humanity for Noosphere," in Moscow, at which they discussed using the ideas of the noosphere in the fields of economy, ethics, and society.

In 2002, representatives of non governmental organizations, scientists, and parliamentary deputies from the four countries of Russia, China, Mongolia and Kazakhstan created the International Coordination Council: "Our mutual home – the Altai." The Council focuses its activities on creating sustainable association of adherents and new models for the development of civilization based on the values and principles of the Earth Charter. To realize such promising projects, there are favorable conditions, such as the historic, philosophic, and cultural heritage of the peoples of Asia and

Europe; the materials of the international discussion on the Earth Charter; and research conducted by our universities, such as the documents of the international conference "Altai-Cosmos-Microcosm," held in Barnaul, in the Altai region of Russia.

As suggested by the rise in popularity of the ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Vladimir Vernadsky, scientific thought has turned its attention to finding a worthy solution to the ecological and social crisis. The roles of human thought, and of personal responsibility for it, have emerged as key elements of the reconstruction of life. ●