

# EARTH CHARTER

## *Adaptation for young people*

### INTRODUCTION

We are living at a very important moment when we have the challenge of saving the Earth. All the peoples and cultures of the world form one great family; for this reason we must unite: to respect nature, to respect human rights and to live together in peace and justice. We have a responsibility towards life, both for ourselves, at present, and for those who will follow us.

**The Earth, our home.** We form part of an immense universe, in which our planet is full of life, with a rich variety of plants, animals and peoples. We, the human beings, depend on its soils, its waters and its air and we have a real obligation to protect the life on Earth.

**The Global Situation.** Unfortunately the patterns of production and consumption that we have today are often destroying the environment, exhausting natural resources (water, air, soil ...) and are making many animal and plant species disappear. The world population is growing as never before, but at the same time life is constantly destroyed by wars, famine, misery, ignorance, disease, injustice ... However, all these serious problems can, if we wish, be overcome.

**What must we do?** The choice is ours: either we unite to care for the Earth and one another, or we destroy ourselves and wipe out life. A very important change is needed: everybody must have what they need to live decently. Today this is possible because we have the knowledge and machines to achieve it. So, it is urgent that we build a more humane and fairer world, where all life is sufficiently valued. We should remember that everything is interlinked: the environment, the economy, ways of living together, spiritual ideas ... If we want to, starting now, we can build a world that is better and more humane for everyone.

**Everybody is responsible.** To change our world we need to be responsible for the whole planet, specially the small part of it where we live, because we are both citizens of our own country and of the world, at the same time. In this way everyone will look after the present and future well-being of the human family and of all the living things on this planet. We must have reverence for life and gratitude for existence. We must know what we are living for and what to do to live decently. We must spread our ideals to all other people around us. In this way all of humanity can share with hope and joy the values of life.

### RESPECT AND CARE FOR LIVING THINGS

#### **1. You must respect the Earth and all things that live on it: people, animals and plants**

- All living things depend on each other.
- Any life has value.
- The human being must maintain his dignity.
- Humans can think, appreciate beauty, do good and seek after non material values.

#### **2. You must care for living things, with understanding and love**

- You can use the natural resources given to us by nature, but you must take care not to harm her.
- Peoples rights must always be protected.
- You must promote the common good.

**3. You must help to form groups of people who act justly and with equality and who progress peacefully, in a sustainable way**

- Every community must assure the respect of human rights.
- Everybody must have the possibility to develop and progress.
- Everybody must have what they need to live in a dignified way.
- Everybody must be responsible for the necessary equilibrium between life and nature.

**4. You must collaborate so that everybody benefits, both now and in centuries to come, from the beauty and the fruits of the Earth**

- We have freedom of action, but we can not neglect the needs of future generations.
- We must transmit to our descendants everything which makes life on Earth progress.

**ON EARTH EVERYTHING IS INTERRELATED**

**5. Protect, and if necessary, restore, the natural order of life on Earth. Pay special attention to life around you and to nature**

- We must develop, but in a way that does not harm nature.
- Certain areas on land and at sea must be totally protected.
- We must look after species which are in danger of extinction.
- We must control the genetic modification of food products.
- We must take care how we use renewable natural resources: water, the soil, trees, fish ...
- We must conserve non renewable resources: oil and other minerals ...

**6. Do not harm the environment around you, when in doubt, act with caution**

- When the scientists are still not sure, you must act with precaution, to avoid damage to the environment.
- The necessary studies must be done to guarantee that new activities will not harm nature.
- We must foresee the future consequences for the environment of what we are doing now.
- We must avoid contamination of any part of the planet.
- We must not allow the accumulation of any radioactive, toxic or dangerous substances.
- Military activities which harm the environment must be avoided.

**7. The way that things are produced and consumed must respect the order of nature, human rights and the well-being of everybody**

- We must reduce, reuse and recycle the materials which we produce and consume.
- The waste we leave must not harm nature.
- We must use energy intelligently and always choose renewable energy sources when possible: the sun, the wind...
- Machinery must always respect the environment.
- We must only consume products which neither do harm to people nor to the environment.
- Everybody must have access to health care and behave responsibly.
- We must learn how to live well in limited space like the Earth.

**8. Be interested in learning about the relationships of living things to each other and to the environment. Also you must be able to share your knowledge with others**

- Scientists around the world must cooperate in looking after the planet.
- Technology and inventions must be used to help to sustain the Earth.
- Existing cultures and beliefs can contribute to the protection of the environment.
- Everybody must be informed about what is necessary for human health and the protection of the environment.

## **JUSTICE FOR EVERYBODY**

### **9. Help eliminate poverty in this world. No reason can justify the existence of the poor**

- Everybody has the right to drinkable water, clean air, sufficient food, uncontaminated soil, adequate housing and safe sanitation.
- Everybody must have the education and the resources necessary to lead a decent life..
- Those people who are unable to look after themselves must be suitably cared for.
- The neglected and the needy must be those who receive most help.

### **10. Cooperate so that everyone can develop and advance in a way that is both just and sustainable.**

#### **This cooperation must also be applied in any group, company or association**

- Wealth must be fairly distributed, both within your nation and around the world.
- The poorer countries must have more resources to help them develop.
- The poorest countries must be freed from their debts.
- World commerce must respect the order of nature and the rights of workers.
- International corporations and economic organisations must act clearly for the good of everybody.

### **11. Affirm that men and women have the same rights to development which is both fair and lasting.**

#### **Both must receive education, have access to health care and earn the same wage for identical work**

- We must assure the rights of women and end the violence against them.
- Women must participate more actively in all aspects of life.
- Families must be strengthened and all their members protected.

### **12. Uphold, without exception, the right of all to a decent environment where their health and spiritual values are protected. This applies specially to those who are most exploited, as are minorities and native peoples**

- There must be no discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, nationality, social situation...
- All peoples have the right to hold their own beliefs, lands and resources and to maintain their own way of life.
- Young people must be helped so they can create new, sustainable, ways of life.
- Sites of cultural and spiritual importance must be protected world-wide.

## **THE PEOPLE DECIDE: NO, TO VIOLENCE; YES, TO PEACE**

### **13. As far as you can, collaborate so that everybody participates in organising, deciding about and correcting the way we live together. The rules are to be fair and there will be an arbitrator to settle difficulties**

- Everybody has the right to receive information about the environmental matters and development plans which affect them.
- Everybody must be able to participate in decision taking at local, regional, national and global levels.
- The rights to freedom of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, association and dissent must be protected.
- The justice system must take action when there is a risk of harm, or harm is done, to nature.
- Corruption must be eliminated everywhere.
- Local communities: towns, neighbourhoods and villages, must take care of their surroundings.

#### **14. Study and put into practise things that help us to live in a fair and sustainable way**

- Everybody, specially children and young people, must have access to the education that enables them to contribute to sustainable development.
- The arts, the sciences and the humanities must all contribute to education for sustainable development.
- Television, radio, and the press together with the rest of the media must help to inform us about society's and nature's needs.
- Moral and spiritual education have a great influence on the way people live.

#### **15. Treat all living things with respect and consideration**

- You can not be cruel to animals, nor make them suffer.
- Methods of hunting and fishing which cause too much suffering must be banned.
- We must avoid the indiscriminate capture or destruction of animals.

#### **16. Collaborate so that all people live without violence and in tolerance and peace**

- Human beings, here and world-wide, must understand and help each other more.
- We must prevent conflicts and make use of cooperation.
- Armies must defend the peace and work on restoration projects.
- We must eliminate nuclear, biological and chemical weapons along with all weapons of mass destruction.
- Outer space should be used for environmental protection and peace keeping.
- Peace lets each individual be at one with himself, with other peoples, cultures and ways of life, and with the Earth and the Totality of which we form a part.

### **THE PATH WE MUST FOLLOW**

Human beings depend on one another and have a duty to conserve and improve the world in which they live. Because of this we must map out a path which is based on complying with the *Earth Charter*.

We must use our imagination to find new ways of life, both here and world-wide, which permit fair and sustainable development for everybody. The multitude of existing cultures will help us in the search. The constant dialogue between human beings will bring us closer to the truth.

Serious difficulties will crop up, that will take effort to resolve. Choosing freely, but for the common good, we will find solutions. Everybody can do something. Everything can help: the arts, science, religion, education, the media, companies, organisations, governments ... Together we will get things done.

To build an Earth, a home for all humanity, the nations of the world must renew their unity. The *Earth Charter*, a new universal law, must be accepted and, subsequently, respected and put into practice by all countries and peoples of the world. This way the environment will be protected and all nations will develop with dignity.

Our times will be remembered like this: "They launched a new form of existence", "they decided for fair and sustainable development", "they made the effort for justice and peace", "they celebrated with joy the pleasure of living".