

Earth Charter Network Meeting

Amsterdam

Summary Report



1-2 December 2008

Earth Charter Network Meeting Amsterdam, 1-2 December 2008

Summary Report

Around 140 people, mostly from Europe, gathered in Amsterdam for two days to attend the Earth Charter Network meeting. Most participants were Earth Charter International affiliates, youth groups, council members, or potential contributors to the new focus area task forces; very few were new comers to the Initiative. The event was an initiative by Earth Charter Commissioner and Former Prime Minister of The Netherlands, Ruud Lubbers. It was jointly organized by the National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development - NCDO and the Earth Charter International Secretariat

The purpose of the meeting was to:

1. Raise the profile of the Earth Charter, particularly in the midst of key world challenges.
2. Identify ways in which the Earth Charter can contribute to the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the negotiations and actions on Climate Change.
3. Identify new alliances and partnerships to implement the long range plans of ECI on decentralized empowerment and global outreach. Including the process of setting up task forces to implement projects in the special areas (Education, Religion, Business, Youth, UN and Media). Welcome Task Force members who are invited to lead projects.
4. To start preparing for Earth Charter+10 in 2010.
5. Bring together Commissioners, Council members and other actors in the EC network.
6. Involve other people and reach out to a wider community of experts and audiences.

Herewith is a summary of the deliberations.

Monday, 1 December 2008

Introduction

The welcome remarks and setting the stage for the meeting was carried out by Ruud Lubbers, Jos van Gennip and Awraham Soetendorp.



Mr. Lubbers, Earth Charter Commissioner, highlighted that the main objective of this two-day meeting was to bring together people that have been involved with the Earth Charter Initiative to share thoughts, experiences and also to clarify points of the new strategy to expand the initiative. The objective was also to exchange ideas on how to make a stronger link between the Earth Charter and the human rights movements, particularly taking the opportunity of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the declaration of Human Rights.

Jos van Gennip, President of NCDO (Earth Charter Affiliate in the Netherlands), joined Mr. Lubbers in welcoming the participants. He stated the importance of such an event for the Dutch society. "We need events like this, we need a strong renewal to our universal responsibility; the reflections that will come up from this event will help the Dutch society to find alternatives to consumerism and short term thinking". He also spoke about the Worldconnectors, of which he is part of, as it also aims at

helping the Dutch society to be aware and committed to live the sustainability paradigm. They use as a framework the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Earth Charter.

Finally, Rabbi and Earth Charter Commissioner Awraham Soetendorp shared with participants his thoughts about the initial steps of the creation of the Earth Charter and his involvement in this initiative. He said that since then, many wonderful things have happened that are keeping him happy and positive about the future. As an example, Awraham Soetendorp mentioned the recent manifesto from different faith traditions that was issued in Uppsala, Sweden regarding climate change and sustainability.

“The search for the Earth Charter is rising, God calls us to join forces, to change minds, hearts and the world”, said Rabbi Soetendorp in his final remarks.

The introductory part finished with the presentation of a film, “The Earth Charter in Action” produced by NCDO, which will be available per request to NCDO / in Dutch (with English subtitles).

Strategy of decentralized empowerment of the Earth Charter Initiative

Moderators: Ruud Lubbers and Razeena Omar (co-chair ECI)

*Panellists: Steven Rockefeller, co-chair ECI Council,
Oscar Motomura, member ECI Council
Brendan Mackey, member ECI Council
Mirian Vilela, executive director ECI.*

Panellists were very positive about this meeting, and were thankful to NCDO for their hospitality. In Brendan Mackey’s words: “*An Earth Charter meeting with NCDO in Amsterdam (KIT) is like the Earth Charter heaven.*”

Mr. Rockefeller briefed the audience about the long range strategy that was adopted by the ECI Council about a year ago. The strategy for the initiative is based on its mission statement; the idea is to expand the EC Initiative exponentially but keeping a small Secretariat. This strategy will rely on lots of volunteer work to take the Earth Charter forward, and these efforts will need to be guided by a few operational principles, which are the Action Guidelines that were developed last year.



He clarified that part of this strategy is the creation of several task forces, who are being organized around specific realms of interest for the EC Initiative, which are: *Education, Religion and Sustainability, Youth, United Nations and Business*. The idea is to identify the specific niches that the EC has in these different areas, and work with different partners and collaborators to promote the vision of the Earth Charter. These task forces will work independently, but they will count on the Secretariat’s support, in terms of materials, communications, and others. Nonetheless, the Secretariat might engage directly in some task forces, for example on Education. Hopefully many groups will find ways to work on these focus areas from where they are.

Brendan Mackey added that it’s impossible to achieve the vision and mission of the EC Initiative with a top down organization and a conventional organizational approach. That is why we need a decentralized strategy that reflects the nature of this Initiative and is able to involve and empower individuals and organizations in carrying out the Earth Charter vision and spreading its message.

Oscar Motomura also clarified many aspects of what this decentralized empowerment strategy means. "Empowerment and global partnerships, these are crucial concepts of this strategy". He mentioned that the partnerships that the EC Initiative envisions are partnerships with individuals mainly. "One person can make great changes" said Mr. Motomura "so we need to empower those individuals since these individuals will involve others in their organization and will eventually change the organization". Regarding the task forces, Mr. Motomura said that they are geared to action in specific fields with the direction of the EC document. He added that eventually, the idea is to have many more task forces, for all important matters and realms of life.

Questions from the audience

The speeches really caught the attention of the audience, who had many questions. One person asked *why is there one task force on Religion and Sustainability? Why are the two combined?* The panellists argued that there are different sensitivities with the EC and religion. Since some groups wrongly affirmed in the past that the Earth Charter wanted to become a new global religion, the Earth Charter Initiative wants to be very clear that the religion task force will not try to tell any religion what are the ethical principles that they should follow. The idea is to support and identify the philosophers in each religion that support the quest of sustainability, to help bring this paradigm to religious and faith groups.

Another question was: *why is there not a task force on Peace and Security?* Brendan Mackey reminded the audience that there are no task forces for every important issue. For example, there is not climate change task force, but it is expected that all task forces deal with climate change, the same with peace and security. Most likely the UN task force should deal more directly with this topic.

Presentations of Task Forces and Results of Working Groups Discussion

A summary of the Task Forces Action Plans were presented by different members of the Earth Charter Initiative. After these presentations, a working group for each task force was organized, in order to give the participants a chance to provide feedback and enrich the suggested action plans. A summary of the discussions held in the working groups is presented here.

Youth Task Force



The action plan was presented by Camila Godinho. As she mentioned, the plan aims to connect the next generation of sustainability leaders. It is composed by a Leadership Team, small project teams and youth groups. Those who are already involved in this task force look for connecting youth representatives with different task forces. They are relying on internet platforms as instrumental for developing their work.

Dominic Stucker presented the results of the working group. Twenty people from ages 19 to 64 attended this group. He mentioned that the existing youth network will continue as part of this task force. Currently there are many activities that are taking place, for example the Global Oneness book and a radio campaign. This is a way the Youth Task Force has found to relate to other task forces of education and media.

The youth task force is a social network, which will use a web page for interaction. It will collaborate with other task forces. As Dominic affirmed, many efforts will go on working with the education task force, in projects with universities using EC Assess, and also with primary and secondary schools.

Education Task Force



The summary of the action plan and the results of the discussion were presented by Rick Clugston. Regarding the plan, he reminded the audience that this is still under construction, therefore, he invited the attendees (and others interested) to make their contributions. The main objectives of this task force are to:

- Evaluate the wealth of resources and experiences of the use of the EC in education around the world.
- Identify gaps of materials.
- Identify good practices.
- Support educators in different levels, with training and connecting them with other educators with similar interests.
- Develop additional resources.
- Strengthen partnerships with UNESCO and other important partners.

Over 40 people attended this task force's working group. An important part of this session went on sharing experiences. Mr. Clugston mentioned that it was not possible to come up with detailed and specific recommendations on the draft plan of action or the further development of a task force, but people decided to create a network of groups that will continue to share experiences and develop some projects together.

Some of the issues discussed were:

- How to use education on sustainable development to open hearts and minds for sustainable lifestyles?
- How to promote teachers to use the EC as an education tool, within their own courses (biology, mathematics, science etc).

United Nations Task Force

Brendan Mackey was in charge of presenting this task force's action plan and summary of the working group discussion. He said that at this moment there is a group of people interested in bringing the Earth Charter into the UN System. Therefore, the objective of this meeting is to strengthen this group by inviting people who know about the UN system and global governance.



The goals of this task force are:

- Advance the international soft law status of the Earth Charter.
- Demonstrate the relevance of the EC in addressing issues that the UN is facing.

There are three opportunities to achieve these goals:

- Acknowledgement of the EC by agencies of the UN system, and the UN General Assembly (we already received endorsement of UNESCO)

- Engage with various reform process, and the security council,
- Demonstrate the contribution to ongoing processes like climate change, and achievement of MDGs.

Twenty people participated in the working group for this focus area. The following are concrete recommendations given by the participants:

1. It is worth pursuing a formal endorsement of the UN General Assembly as it could elevate the soft-law status of the EC, but we need a strategy to pursue it. It is important to identify the people that know how to do it.
2. In order to inject the EC into UN governance processes it is important to organize a coalition of countries that support the EC, start with the European Union. It was suggested that Ruud Lubbers, Gorbachev and Rockefeller can start relations with EC and EU Community.
3. Engage with the UN Commission for SD, and their formal groups.
4. It is important to raise visibility of the EC in international political processes. Some suggested including the EC in the new UN One System process, also elevating the EC message in the UN Security Council.

Religion and Sustainability Task Force

The action plan and summary of the working group was presented by Michael Slaby. He first mentioned that the motivation of this task force is to inspire religious institutions to use the Earth Charter, to help them fully understand the current issues and to help them frame inclusive solutions and activities.



Current resources available to this task force work are:

- Leadership and guidance from religious leaders that were involved in the drafting process.
- Group of 400 organizations that have already endorsed the EC.
- Resources that have been developed.

The initial discussion of the working group followed up a question raised during the plenary session, about the name of this task force. Participants proposed that the current name should be maintained, but there should be an explanatory note to clarify that it covers all religious traditions and spiritual movements.

Regarding the question of who should be in this TF, the participants suggested the following:

1. One or several representatives of each major religious tradition.
2. Experts from the study of religion and ecology.
3. Representatives of religious institutions that are already using the EC.

Part of the discussion went on who is the target group of this Task Force? Since there are different audiences that could be targeted, such as religious leaders, or religion scholars, and the approaches to reaching them are very different, it is important to clarify the group to prioritize, before developing the plan of action of this TF.

It was agreed that this TF should help enable dialogue on three levels:

- Within the religions (intra-religious dialogue)

- Between the religions (interreligious dialogue)
- Between the religions and other sectors of society

There was also a discussion of what is expected from this task force.

On publications, it was suggested to have commentaries on the EC from different religions and perspectives, also to present traditions from different religions that reflect the principles of sustainability. Also, an Earth Charter Guide to Interreligious Dialogue and Collaboration that puts the Earth Charter into the context of the planned UN Decade on Interreligious Dialogue.

Other specific actions suggested to follow up this discussion were:

- Form a small community that will be responsible for identifying and issuing the invitation to scholars to write contributions on the EC.
- Rabbi Soetendorp offered his guidance and leadership for the TF and suggested that the TF could be coordinated from his newly expanded organization, the Jacob Soetendorp Institute for Human Values.
- Highlight the Earth Charter in key events, such as the Parliament of the World's Religions in Melbourne, Australia, in December 2009.

Suggestions of who could contribute with this task force should be sent to Michael Slaby: mslaby@earthcharter.org

Business Task Force



The action plan was presented by Oscar Motomura, and the results of the working group were presented by Paul Hohnen.

The vision of the Business task force is to have a large number of seed task forces around the world that will be loosely connected in regional, sectorial and/or national levels through the web. Each seed task force is a small group that will attempt to engage business groups in using the Earth Charter in their decision making process, or as part of a process to review their

mission statement. In any case the goal is to make business people not only understand the role of the Earth Charter as related to the Global compact, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and MDGs, but also encourage them to use it. There is a seed task force that already started in Brazil that will promote the Earth Charter among business groups; this can serve as an example for other parts of the world.

Twenty three people participated in this task force's working group discussion.

Participants shared their experiences and views about how to engage with the private sector. While participants recognized that there is no "one size fits all" approach, there are some general drivers for attracting business interest, such as: appealing to the profit motive; the ability to use the EC to understand business risk and opportunities; and its potential to be a tool to inspire new thinking among staff to respond to sustainability challenges. It was recommended as well to avoid terminology like endorsement or soft law. Instead of asking businesses to endorse the EC, ask them to adapt it to the company's organizational vision and mission.

Time did not permit to finalize the discussion of how the different Business Task Forces would be set up, how they would operate, and how they would share learning and contacts. To help in this regard, NCDO offered to draft a short guidance paper suggesting possible ways of sharing examples of best practice, ensuring protection of the EC logo, and a consistent approach to fund raising.

Nonetheless, there were suggestions of specific actions that people and organizations of the Earth Charter Initiative can develop right away:

- Find respected individual business leaders, especially those who can have a large impact on business opinion. And get them to understand the essence of the Earth Charter. This could be done through conferences, training workshops or other activities alike. Then, they could become ambassadors in convening a group of CEOs and identify how to proceed in putting the EC into practice.
- Build a resource center, where business can get resources to help CEOs and employees to think differently about their company and the world; and using topical issues (e.g. the financial crisis) to re-think the role of business.
- Develop education about the EC in business schools; collecting examples of best practices;

Encourage all EC endorsers to report using the GRI framework. Reporting is a practical way of celebrating use of the EC, and measuring best practice.

Celebrating the partnership between ECI and GRI



In the context of a partnership between ECI and GRI, Teresa Fogelberg, director of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and Ruud Lubbers launched a publication called: *The Earth Charter, GRI and the Global Compact: Guidance to users on the synergies in application and reporting*.

“GRI is the most important reporting framework on sustainability for companies”, said Mrs. Fogelberg. She affirmed that the Earth Charter is an important guide to redefining businesses vision and mission that is why

this partnership is very beneficial for both initiatives.

Companies use the GRI documents because:

- of their reputation,
- civil society ask them to do it,
- shareholders ask them to do it,
- and financial analysts require this type of information

Teresa Fogelberg announced that GRI has committed to reach out to their network, and 2000 companies with this publication, and will promote the Earth Charter and this publication. Nonetheless, she raised her concern about how to prevent the misuse of the Earth Charter name and logo by some unethical businesses.

Sharing the experiences of Earth Charter Affiliates

In this session, Mirian Vilela reminded the audience of the importance of the EC Affiliates - to help implement the Initiative's mission and goals, and most importantly, to reach out to people in their countries. She affirmed that "affiliates play a key role in using and promoting the Earth Charter in their sphere of action and raising awareness about the EC vision in their context". Therefore, the main purpose for this session was to offer some affiliates a space to share what they have been doing in their countries and how they see their role in the overall Earth Charter Initiative: *what is the role of an Affiliate?*

Alide Roerink shared what has been NCDO's role as EC Affiliate in Netherlands. Some of the activities they have done include:

- Translation and constant revision of the EC text into Dutch.
- Generate awareness about the EC among youth, in sports and businesses
- Develop communication materials (brochure, videos)

"We feel we have to be there for others – to support their work and their efforts and initiatives in using the Earth Charter. But we constantly encourage our partners to be active in implementing their own activities", said Alide Roerink.



Eva Sequeira, from Fundacion Valores, Affiliate from Spain, shared their experiences with EC in education. This foundation's main goal is to integrate values of sustainability into all aspects of society. They disseminate the Earth Charter values through workshops, teacher training courses, conferences (Utopia Conference) and educational materials. They have approached the Ministries of Education and Environment of Spain to ask for their support in their dissemination efforts.

"We don't try to convince people about the EC, but we try to present it in a way that people can fall in love with it and see its usefulness", said Eva Sequeira.

Bep Visser, shared about the NCDO and COS EC Education Program with children. Under this program, they are promoting the EC principles through the arts, like paintings and poems. They have developed an art book that is exhibited in the Town Hall, and are thinking to develop a Youth EC book by 2010. Interestingly, this project evolved from the ideas that were developed by other affiliates, reinforcing the importance of developing mechanisms to promote more exchange of ideas and lessons learned between affiliates and other members of EC Initiative.

Vladimir Zakharov, from the Centre for Environmental Policy and Culture, Russia shared that they have been very active in promoting the Earth Charter across their network, which encompasses 60 regions of Russia. They have been producing and distributing EC brochures, sending articles to newspapers, they also created an Earth Charter Russian website, where basic information in Russian is available. Through the Public Chamber, they also plan to organize conferences on sustainability and youth using the Earth Charter as a framework.



The following are four basic premises of the role the affiliates need to play in their context:

- disseminate EC to their network and general public
- help people feel they are welcome and not alone in this effort.
- It should be clear to everyone what the Earth Charter is.
- If an organisation or individual wants to join, they should know exactly what they could do

Anja Becker, from Ecumenical Initiative One World, Germany, shared about their activities with the EC, which are:

- Helping to organize the International Youth Future Forum, to be held in Bonn in April 2009 of which the Pre-conference will be completely based on the EC.
- Translate Earth Charter materials into German
- Organize, in collaboration with others, teacher training workshops in Germany

For 30 years, this organization has been actively publishing quarterly publications, which are geared not only to Christians, or faith organizations, but to a wider audience.

As many of the experiences shared in this session showed, one of the most important roles of the Affiliates is to disseminate and promote the Earth Charter in their own countries or contexts in local languages. To facilitate this, the ECI Secretariat, jointly with Amana-key, a Brazilian partner, developed a prototype of a national EC website, with basic information that hopefully affiliates and partners can help to translate in as many languages as possible. Then set up Earth Charter national websites in as many languages as possible following the same design format to give a signal of being part of the same movement/effort. The aim is to offer core information of EC in local languages, said Mirian Vilela.

Closing Remarks

The first day of the meeting finished with comments from Ruud Lubbers, Henriette Rasmussen, Mohamed Sahnoun

For Earth Charter Commissioner Henriette Rasmussen, this was an inspiring day. She reminded us of the Inuit contributions to the drafting process, and the importance for Greenland, which is in the center of climate change discussions, to partner with organizations and governments around the world to work on solutions, such as being part of this movement.

Mohamed Sahnoun, also member of the Earth Charter Commission, encouraged the audience to not feel disappointed that the Earth Charter is not as widely known and used as it was expected during its initial steps. "It will take some time for people to be aware, just like what happened with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights". He finished by making a plea to put pressure on governments to reduce military expenditures, and increase funding for sustainable development initiatives.

Finally, Mr. Lubbers agreed that we need patience for the growth of the Earth Charter Initiative at the same time as we need to continuously engage others in this process; he expressed his optimism when he sees so many young people and women engaged in the initiative.

Tuesday, 2 December 2008

The first activity of the day was an overview of the working group discussions on the task forces. A summary of these discussions can be found in Annex 1. The rest of the day, two round tables were organized; the first one discussed the links between the EC and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The second round table dealt with the issue of climate change and its ethical dimension.

Round table 1: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Earth Charter

Moderator: Johannah Bernstein, Environmental Law and Policy Consulting

*Panellists: Steven Rockefeller, Chair, ECI Council
Tineke Lambooy, Faculty of Law, Utrecht University
Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives, India
Dumisani Nyoni, ECI Council member
Ruud Lubbers, Earth Charter Commissioner*

The main objectives of this round table were to deepen our understanding about the synergies between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the Earth Charter, and how in concrete ways the integrated vision of the EC can contribute to the human rights movement. There is momentum this year for this discussion because of the 60th anniversary of the UDHR.



According to **Steven Rockefeller**, the Earth Charter complements the UDHR because it focuses on responsibilities, whereas the UDHR focuses on rights.

“One of the major responsibilities is everybody’s duty to respect HR; they are part of the core ethical vision of the EC”, said Mr. Rockefeller. Nonetheless, he mentioned that we also have responsibility with future generations, which was not dealt in the UDHR.

The EC articulates an important human right that is not included in any global declaration, which is the right to a safe and healthy environment. The importance of this human right is evident, since many security problems rise because of unhealthy environments.

Mr. Rockefeller also argued that due to its focus on responsibilities, the EC brings some limitations to some rights and freedoms, examples can be found in Principles 2a, 4a, 7. He stated that many of these principles, which encompass environmental rights, are difficult to include in international declarations, because, usually governments are fearful of their financial and social implications, because their focus is on economic development.

Tineke Lambooy affirmed that the EC has an important role in bring integrated principles for sustainability to companies and the private sector, because:

- It has the power to convince, offering a visionary power
- It is a good compilation of everything that can be found in all international law (piles of documents and agreements), but condensed.
- It is a guideline for alternative dispute resolution.

Ashok Khosla shared his vision about social and economic disparities, and what could be the role of the EC to address these inequalities, that are inherently human and environmental rights issues.

The EC captures the disparities that we are facing, said Mr. Koshla, most importantly, its principles has implicit the question, why should we *not* have a better world for everyone? It brings to everyone's attention the need to work against these inequalities. But, as a footnote, Mr. Koshla suggested that to make the EC more appealing it should be presented in a song.

Dumisani Nyoni dealt with the question: how the EC plays a role in a context where there are violations of human rights?

He affirmed that the EC captures much of the complexity of the current state of the world, in a more inclusive way than the UDHR. In Zimbabwe, where there are difficult issues regarding violations of human rights, bringing forth an educated population is of key importance and a challenge. That is why, he is using the Earth Charter as a catalyst to reinvent education, and engage educators in promoting a more peaceful society.

Dumisani expressed his feelings of hope for the time that we are living, and the opportunities to come for a more inclusive, sustainable and peaceful world. He said *"In no other time a man named Barack Obama could have been President of the US. In no other time, a 'kid' from Zimbabwe, like me, could have been sited here, between a former Prime Minister of Netherlands and important international intellectuals. The inclusiveness of the EC is its biggest asset"*.

Ruud Lubbers agreed with the panellists' arguments, which coincide with the book he is co-authoring called "Inspiration for Global Governance". This book was then formally launched at the end of this round table session. According to Ruud Lubbers some of the characteristics of the EC that complement the UDHR are:

- the concept of community of life,
- the incorporation of future generations: breakthrough in intergenerational thinking,
- the importance to value healthy environments and diversity (biodiversity, cultural diversity),
- the importance of participatory processes for governance.
- spiritual dimension of life – secular institutions have not been successful. For real progress we need the spiritual dimension. This is very important in the wording of the EC.

Comments from the public

After the panellists' presentations, the audience reflected on the question *How to use the EC in your work on promoting human rights?* In a general sense, most of the attendees conceptualize the promotion of human rights through education programs, and by approaching governments and businesses.

There were discussions on how to make a compelling case of sustainability for the private sector. In this sense, Mr. Khosla remembered the words of an economic guru who said that the main objective for any company is to make profit, but, he added, it is also the responsibility of every person to not harm others.

Panellists agreed on the importance of to not give up on approaching governments, Dumisani stressed the importance of bringing the EC to the European Union Parliament.



Roundtable II: The Earth Charter and the struggle against climate change

Moderator: Erna Witolear, Earth Charter Commissioner

*Panellists: Ashok Khosla, President, Development Alternatives, India and IUCN
Eduard Muller, Rector, Universidad de Cooperacion Internacional, Costa Rica
Brendan Mackey, member ECI Council and Australia National University
Song Li, member ECI Council
Mohamed Sahnoun, member Earth Charter Commission
Ruud Lubbers, Earth Charter Commissioner*

This round table opened an opportunity for the attendees to reflect on what is probably the most important issue in the international agenda, concerning sustainability.

“We are NOW in the time to decide our future”, this quote is a variation from the Earth Charter Preamble, said **Eduard Muller** in his speech, is an invitation to use the EC as a way forward to deal with climate change issues.

Throughout the presentations, there was a tacit agreement that many of current problems are linked to climate change, either as a cause or a consequence. Poverty, social inequalities, loss of biodiversity, food security, mining and natural resources depletion, population growth, and others were discussed by the panellists. The numbers and facts of how these problems are affecting life on Earth (e.g. species extinction, decline of marine resource, etc), shocked many people in the audience, who actually expressed their urge to act.

What should we do to in the struggle against climate change, and how the EC can help? These were questions dealt by the panellists.

Ashok Khosla argued that although solutions should move beyond the technological discourse, it is important that to reach an agreement in the international negotiations on a limit for per capita emissions.

Brendan Mackey highlighted the importance of influence in international negotiations for emissions reductions. He argued that the main problem to reaching such agreements is of an ethical nature; furthermore, there are 2 overarching ethical principles that are constantly avoided:

1. Intergenerational equity regarding carbon emissions. In this sense, to be more equitable, it is important to reduce emissions in the present to stabilize the level of emissions for the future.
2. Act now. Brendan Mackey said it has to be clear for all that we cannot wait any longer to act, there has to be a dramatic reduction of fossil fuel consumption to avoid potentially catastrophic consequences. A contraction of economies and consumption patterns might be needed.

Regarding adaptation measures, **Song Li** mentioned the importance to put in place processes to restore the integrity of Earth’s ecological systems. “Nonetheless, as **Mr. Muller** said, consequences vary according to the context, so adaptation strategies need to be crafted at the local level.”

As an example of this type of strategy, a participant from the audience, Fernanda Baumhardt, who is a journalist, presented a participatory video that was filmed in Malawi.



This showed how people are changing how they farm, even what animals they raise. As an example, because of constant flooding, they are raising ducks instead of chickens.

Regarding **the role the Earth Charter can play**, it can have a central role in bring the ethical dimension to the climate change negotiations. Also, as Brendan Mackey said, “it can help make people care”, and urge them to act now.

“We need change of hearts, not only minds”, we need different patterns of consumption, new leadership and new paradigms towards sustainability, this can be fostered by the Earth Charter”, said Eduard Muller.

At the end of the session, **Mohamed Sahnoun** and **Ruud Lubbers** commented on the panellists’ speeches. Mr. Lubbers mentioned about a Dutch initiative to capture and store carbon. Although he agrees on the importance of reduce carbon, he argues that this might not be feasible in the short term for many governments. “Therefore there is also a need to find solutions for current emissions” They are developing technology that will be ready for 2020, the objective is that by 2025 there will be no carbon emissions from Netherlands.

The audience was very active in commenting on this panel. Many of the comments went on discussing how to get the message out?

One suggestion was to develop a climate change toolkit based on the presentations of this panel, and provide people with guidelines about how they can use the EC to raise awareness and understanding about climate change.

Also it was recommended that the media, the arts and games be used more actively, as a form of expressions to reach the masses. As an example from the audience, Green Cross Sweden will organize a concert and film festival about climate change in May, 2009.



Closing Session – Looking forward to Earth Charter + 10 in 2010

Moderators: Ruud Lubbers and Razeena Omar

*Panellists: Steven Rockefeller,
Mirian Vilela*

As stated in the title, this session looked forward to what the new developments for the Earth Charter Initiative are going to be. The task forces are new experiments to help guide those involved in the Earth Charter movement to be active in key focus areas, where they are already active and knowledgeable, said Steven Rockefeller, the EC Council will work on guidelines for them, nonetheless he invited the audience to keep in touch and send comments about how they think these task forces should work.

Mirian Vilela added that we are still in the learning process, so there is still a lot to polish as we move forward with the setting up of the task forces and in the decentralization strategy. She mentioned that the EC Initiative is focusing on expansion and decentralization but that this process requires consistency and coherence. That is why guiding/operational principles were developed in order to keep a certain level of consistency throughout this decentralized movement. She said “there were interesting inputs made in this meeting, which will help to craft additional guidelines for the task forces”.

There will probably be a celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Earth Charter in 2010. A decision needs to be made about two possible options: to organize an international event or a series of regional events. Nonetheless, the purpose of this celebration is clear: it will be a time to share experiences about how people use the EC, and to assess the impact and progress of the Initiative.

Mirian Vilela invited the attendees to offer their ideas and comments about this celebration, and any other contribution to make this celebration possible. She stressed that there are no funds for this event yet and it is not happening for sure, but these are only ideas.

As closing remarks, the panellists and moderators expressed their gratitude, for NCDO and the Earth Charter Secretariat for making this event possible.

Ruud Lubbers was hopeful for the Earth Charter Initiative, which is being taken over by younger people. In a sense, he added, the EC is a pro-globalization movement, since the world is connected, but is a movement that respects diversity and nature.

As a final treat for the audience, members of the youth initiative presented a video that they made about this meeting. The video, which was serious and funny at the same time, captured the ideas of many attendees about how to help the Earth Charter thrive.

Documents launched at the Earth Charter Network Meeting:

1. ECI Handbook 2008
2. The Earth Charter, GRI and the Global Compact: Guidance to Users on the Synergies in Application and Reporting. GRI Series on Tools, November 2008.
3. Inspiration for Global Governance. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Earth Charter, by Ruud Lubbers, Willem van Genugten and Tineke Lambooy

ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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