

REPORT ON THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING OF EARTH CHARTER SIERRA LEONE (ECSL)

The launching which took place on 21st September 2011 at the **Harry Yansaneh Memorial Hall, Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ) headquarters**, Campbell Street, Freetown also marks the commemoration of the International Day of Peace.

The program brought together representatives from civil society organizations, UN family, government, youth leaders, the print and electronic media as well as the business sector.

The welcome address was given by Mr. Abubakarr Kamara, Director at Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID) Sierra Leone.

Giving an overview of the Earth Charter and the launching, Mr. Donald Kalokoh, Acting Coordinator of the ECSL firstly called on participants to stand and observe a minute of silence in remembrance of our brothers and sisters who lost their lives during the country's eleven years brutal civil war. He said the day is symbolic as it marks the celebration of the International Day of Peace set aside by the United Nations.

He said the journey that lead to the occasion marking the official launching of the Earth Charter network in Sierra Leone started way back in 2003 when the Earth Charter was first introduced during the creation of Earth Charter Youth Group (ECYG-SL) by a dynamic activist in the person of Mr. Sylvanus S. Murray, Executive Coordinator of ECSL and Founder of the Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID) [www.advocacyinitiative.org].

Donald informed the gathering that the Earth Charter Initiative is an extraordinary diverse, global network of people, organizations', and institutions that participate in promoting and implementing the values and principles of the Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter he continued is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life and future generations.

It is a product of decade-long, worldwide, cross cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values.

The mission of the Earth Charter Initiative is to promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on shared ethical framework that includes respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, universal human rights, respect for diversity, economic justice, democracy and a culture of peace.

The Coordinator went on to say that Earth Charter Sierra Leone seeks to have people and organizations in Sierra Leone putting the Mission of the Earth Charter Initiative into action together with their peers and communities.

**Contact: C/o Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID), 17 Circular Road,
P.O.Box 1465, Freetown, Sierra Leone**

E-mail: info@earthchartersl.org Web: www.earthchartersl.net



Earth Charter Sierra Leone (ECSL)

As a country chapter, ECSL also seeks to establish a sound ethical foundation for the emerging global society and to help build a sustainable country based on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.

The coordinator concluded by stating that Earth Charter Sierra Leone will continue to strengthen the existing youth networks and school clubs across the country as ECSL is now moving beyond just youth groups and school clubs towards making it a national organisation that will comprise of diverse groups/organizations/institutions nation-wide.

According to Mr. Kalokoh, ECSL will continue to expand its network and partner with more organizations across the country. The Coordinator added and appealed to organizations' and like minded individuals to ENDORSE the Earth Charter. "You can do so by following the link to our website, www.earthchartersl.net" the Coordinator concluded.

Statements were also made by government functionaries as well as a representative of the UN family in Sierra Leone.

The keynote address was delivered by **Mr. Anthony Koroma; Commissioner of the National Youth Commission** who also performed the official launch of ECSL. In His keynote address, Mr. Koroma lauded the initiative of ECSL and thanked the organizers for the honor bestowed on him to launch the organisation.

He called on the Earth Charter Sierra Leone network to focus on working with youth groups, schools women and community based organizations. ***He pledged the government and the Youth Commission's support to ECSL towards expanding their outreach.***

"On behalf of the government and the people of Sierra Leone, I now officially launch the Earth Charter Sierra Leone" Mr. Koroma concluded.

The launching was climaxed with an interactive session by participants who made meaningful contributions. Among the key contributors was **UNDPs representative Fatmata Sarah Turay**. She was concerned about how and where ECSL get funding to run their programs. She also raised the issue of sustainability and remuneration of ECSL staff.

Madam Fatu Mansary, a representative from the Ministry of Education appealed for ECSL to focus on working more with schools both primary and secondary and to set up ECSL school clubs.

Other contributors called for networking with more organisations, training and capacity building of Earth Charter Sierra Leone network member organizations' to enable them know more about the Initiative.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Mohamed B. Koroma, Communications Officer (Ag), ECSL.

Funds for the launching ceremony and all other expenses associated with the running of ECSL are provided by the Advocacy Initiative for Development (AID) which is also Hosting the network.

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