



# THE EARTH CHARTER INITIATIVE

## FACT SHEET

### **ABOUT THE EARTH CHARTER**

- The World Commission on Environment and Development (aka "the Brundtland Commission") called for "a universal declaration" and "new charter" to set "new norms" to guide the transition to sustainable development. (*Our Common Future*, 1987)
- Discussions about an Earth Charter took place in the process leading to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, but the time for such a declaration was not right. The Rio Declaration became the statement of the achievable consensus at that time.
- In 1994, Maurice Strong (Secretary-General of the Rio Summit) and Mikhail Gorbachev, working through organizations they each founded (Earth Council and Green Cross International respectively), launched an initiative to develop an Earth Charter as a civil society initiative. The initial drafting and consultation process drew on hundreds of international documents.
- Messrs. Strong and Gorbachev convened an independent Earth Charter Commission in 1997 to oversee the development of the text and to come to agreement on a global consensus document.
- After numerous drafts and after considering the input of people from all regions of the world, the Earth Charter Commission came to consensus on the Earth Charter in March, 2000, at a meeting held at UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Earth Charter was later formally launched in ceremonies at The Peace Palace in The Hague.
- Over the next five years, a formal endorsement campaign attracted over 2,000 organizational endorsements, representing millions of people, including numerous national and international associations, and ultimately global institutions such as UNESCO and IUCN – The World Conservation Union. Many thousands of individuals also endorsed the Earth Charter.
- Efforts to have the Earth Charter formally recognized at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002, came very close to success, resulting in numerous public statements of support from world leaders and heads of state.
- The Earth Charter is now increasingly recognized as a global consensus statement on the meaning of sustainability, the challenge and vision of sustainable development, and the principles by which sustainable development is to be achieved. It is used as a basis for peace negotiations, as a reference document in the development of global standards and codes of ethics, as resource for governance and legislative processes, as a community development tool, as an educational framework for sustainable development, and in many other contexts. The Charter was also an important influence on the Plan of Implementation for the UNESCO Decade for Education on Sustainable Development.

### **ABOUT THE EARTH CHARTER INITIATIVE**

- The Earth Charter Initiative is the collective name for the extraordinarily diverse, global network of people, organizations, and institutions who participate in promoting the Earth Charter, and in implementing its principles in practice.
- The Initiative is a broad-based, voluntary, civil society effort, but participants include leading international institutions, national government agencies, university associations, NGOs, cities, faith groups, and many well-known leaders in sustainable development.
- A formal network of affiliates, representatives, and National Committees helps to promote the Earth Charter around the world. Many of these representatives are based in prominent national-level organizations and institutions.
- The Initiative is served and coordinated by a very small staff, working from its headquarters in Costa Rica and the Earth Charter Center on Education for Sustainable Development which focuses on the Initiative's extensive work in the field of Education for Sustainable Development, in partnership with the UN-chartered University for Peace.
- The Earth Charter Initiative is funded, at the international level, by foundations, public grants and generous individual donors (who donate their time as well as their financial resources).

**For more information, please see [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org) (Note: Website under reconstruction)**