INTERDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL ETHICS

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I would like to thank Professors Randy David, Cynthia Bautista, and the Ramon Magsaysay Awards Foundation for arranging this event and the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and Miriam College for making it possible. I also want to thank all of you here today for your interest and participation. I look forward to the comments of the respondents and to the dialogue that will follow.

What has brought me to the Philippines is the collaboration of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund over the past forty-seven years with the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, and therefore, at the outset I would like to tell you briefly about the mission and programs of the RBF. Our basic mission is to promote social change that helps to build a just, sustainable and peaceful world. We have programs in Democratic Practice, Sustainable Development, Peace and Security, and Human Advancement. The last includes arts and culture and initiatives like the Ramon Magsaysay Award. In addition, the RBF focuses special attention on what we call pivotal places which have a large influence on a region or the world. At present we have designated four pivotal places. They include New York City, our home base; Serbia and Montenegro in the Balkans; South Africa; and in Asia, Southern China. We endeavor to apply in a coordinated fashion three or four of our programs in each of these pivotal places. Some of our international grant making goes on outside these pivotal places—for example, we have a program that endeavors to promote mutual understanding between Western and Muslim societies. Some of our grant making addresses global issues such as climate change or the need for transparent and participatory forms of global governance.

The RBF identifies its grant making as "philanthropy for an interdependent world," and this leads me to turn to the topic of my remarks "Interdependence and Global Ethics." In what follows, I speak as an individual global citizen who is part of the international global ethics movement. If you remember only one idea from what I have to say today, I hope it will be this: In our increasingly interdependent world, cross cultural agreement on shared values has become an evolutionary possibility and a social and ecological necessity.

I. Interdependence and the Need for Global Ethics

Under the impact of industrialization, modern technology, the information revolution, and economic globalization, the world we live in is ever more tightly interconnected. Often what happens locally has a significant global impact ecologically, economically, politically, or socially, and global trends and events influence local communities throughout the world. Increasingly our individual stories are part of one global story as never before. In this sense we are all living in a new age of global history.

In such an interconnected world, no society or nation—not even the most powerful—can effectively address the environmental, economic, and social problems it faces and ensure the security of its people by acting alone. These problems include global warming, the depletion of resources, ecological degradation, poverty, the growing gap between rich and poor, intolerance and discrimination, the spread of infectious disease, organized crime, terrorism, and war. Partnership, cooperation, and collaboration among nations and diverse cultures in the 21st century have become essential to survival and human development. Governments ignore this simple truth at their peril. Opinion surveys indicate that most of my fellow citizens in the United States understand and respect this principle and want a federal government in Washington that will act on it. The RBF is working to promote a constructive debate on this subject in the US, and it has become an important issue in the current US presidential election.

However, calls for cooperation are not sufficient to achieve it. The conditions for cooperation must be created. This requires mutual understanding and agreement on common goals and shared values. Only a joint commitment to common goals and values will create the trust and sense of shared purpose that makes partnership and collaborative actions possible and effective. In short, this means global ethics.

Community at any level depends upon the existence of shared values. Humanity has reached a stage in its development technologically and economically where a world community made up of a diversity of cultures and religions is both possible and necessary. Some would argue that it is humanity's spiritual destiny to build a just, sustainable and peaceful world community. I believe that. However, to achieve this ideal a further development in the evolution of our ethical and spiritual consciousness must occur. This means working out through dialogue agreement on a core of fundamental values adequate to the issues that confront us. This is the spiritual challenge presented by industrial-technological civilization in the twenty-first century. It is doubtful whether humanity can find any lasting solution to the big problems it faces without taking this spiritual challenge to heart. We are globalizing the outer world, and I doubt we can stop the process even if we wanted to do so. We can, however, work to guide and shape the

process by giving it a soul—that is by creating an ethical vision of where we want the process to go and committing ourselves to it in a spirit of solidarity and hope. This is the inner globalization that must occur to build global cooperation and community and reverse negative trends that threaten the future.

No one has said this would be easy, but no major advance in human evolution has been easy. The good news is that this transformation in human consciousness is already well advanced in many quarters.

II. Critics and Skeptics

There are, of course, critics and skeptics who for one reason or another oppose global ethics or who consider it an idealistic fantasy. Before turning to the advances that have been made in global ethics, I want to respond to some of the most common objections to the undertaking.

First of all, there are those who fear that global ethics will mean cultural imperialism—one culture imposing its values on everyone else. It is true that in the past many emperors, religious leaders, and philosophers have dreamed of doing just that. However, in the 20th century a different approach to global ethics emerged. This approach involves cross-cultural, interfaith dialogue in search of common ground. The classic example is the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations after World War II. If global ethics are the product of a world wide dialogue on shared values, the danger of cultural imperialism can be avoided.

Second, there are the so-called realists in international affairs who argue that ethical values are irrelevant in this sphere of human relations. International relations, they contend, are governed by the self-interest of sovereign states and by hard power, that is, economic and military might. This outlook involves a cynical and overly pessimistic view of human nature that easily becomes a justification for the domination and control of others and for the refusal to be bound by international law. This outlook discourages nations and religions from striving to lead humanity forward into the next phase in its spiritual, ethical, and political evolution. To recognize the tendency to evil in human nature and the need to use force under certain circumstances and as a last resort in order to restrain evil is part of wisdom. To fail to recognize that humanity also has a capacity for sympathy, compassion, common sense, and justice unnecessarily narrows our vision of what is possible. Moreover, in an interdependent world, the self-interest of all nations is increasingly bound up with the ecological and social common good. To recognize this is not irresponsible idealism but sound practical sense. The ethical quality of our international relations as well as our domestic relations reflects what kind of persons we choose to be.

Third, there are those who argue that common values do not exist. The anthropological evidence does not support that view. All the world's great religions recognize the fundamental importance of ethics, and accordingly counsel their followers to do what is good and to avoid what is evil. Furthermore, in all cultures one finds in the midst of great differences a core of common ethical values. These include guidelines for mutual care and support, prohibitions against harming others and violence, and certain elemental principles regarding fairness and procedural justice. The Golden Rule, for example, can be found in many cultures throughout the world. Today a faith in fundamental human rights is widely shared and forms the foundation of the new, emerging global ethics.

III. The Emergence of a New Global Ethic and the Concept of Sustainability

During the second half of the twentieth century a new global ethic has been taking form. It is the product of the international negotiations associated with the development of international law and the cross-cultural dialogue pursued by many organizations and groups in civil society. It is also important to note that during the 1980s the concept of sustainable development emerged as a new big organizing idea with far reaching ethical implications for a new planetary ethic.

The story begins with the drafting of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In accord with these documents, during its first twenty-five years the United Nations focused its attention on the values of human rights, equitable development, and building peace. However, with the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, environmental protection emerged as a new common concern of the international community and the UN. The World Charter for Nature adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982 affirms respect for nature as a fundamental ethical principle and sets forth a compelling vision of the values and responsibilities that must be adopted in order to implement the principle.

Environmental concerns led to construction of the concept of sustainable development as a new guiding ecological, economic, and social ideal. Sustainable development was first introduced to the international community by the Brundtland Commission (World Commission on Environment and Development) in its report Our Common Future, which was published in 1987. In that report, sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. In other words, a commitment to sustainability means taking a long-term view and embracing an ethic of intergenerational responsibility.

Another good short definition developed by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) conceives the goal of sustainable development to be improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of Earth's ecosystems. The association of development in this definition with improving the quality of life makes clear that development means more than economic development. It is human development in its full sense. The IUCN definition also recognizes that people are an interdependent part of the larger world of nature and that sustainability means devising ways of living that benefit both people and ecosystems. The values and principles of sustainable development were elaborated by the United Nations system in and through the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

Over the past three decades, a global civil society network of NGOs has emerged that has made many important contributions to the dialogue over shared values and global ethics. Academic studies, commission reports, and hundreds of people's treaties and nongovernmental declarations have been prepared and circulated. A few examples are the Earth Covenant drafted by the Global Education Associates, the "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic" issued by the Parliament of the World's Religions, and the report of the Commission on Global Governance. Two other especially significant examples are the Filipino People's Earth Charter and the international Earth Charter, about which I will say more shortly.

Before commenting further on the Earth Charter, it is important to note the way the concept of sustainable living and development has been broadened. As the idea of sustainability has been studied, debated, and experimentally tested, there has been a deepening appreciation of global interdependence and a growing realization that humanity's environmental, economic, and social challenges are closely interrelated. This has led to recognition that the problems facing people locally and globally can only be addressed with holistic thinking and integrated problem solving as well as worldwide cooperation. As a result of these insights, sustainable development is often considered an inclusive ideal. For example, the WSSD Plan of Implementation refers to the three pillars of sustainable development as the eradication of poverty, equitable economic development, and environmental protection.

IV. The Earth Charter

Perhaps the best relatively brief inclusive definition of the fundamental principles of sustainability is found in the international Earth Charter launched in 2000. This civil society declaration sets forth "interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life" that are designed to provide "an ethical foundation for the emerging world community." In the Earth Charter, then, there is a unique articulation of the new emerging global ethics organized around the goal of a transition to sustainable ways of living.

The process by which the Charter was created is especially significant as well as the content. It is the product of a decade long, worldwide, cross-cultural, interfaith dialogue. The drafting of the Charter involved the most open and participatory process ever associated with creation of an international document.

The consultation and drafting process began as an intergovernmental project proposed by the Brundtland Commission. It was made part of the agenda for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Among the many contributions to this process was a declaration entitled "In Our Hands" prepared under Filipino leadership by a Southeast Asian Regional Consultation on a People's Agenda for Environmentally Sustainable Development, which took place at Los Banos. Governments, however, could not agree on an Earth Charter at the Rio Earth Summit, and they had little interest in pursuing the task. Therefore, in 1994 Maurice Strong, the secretary-general of the Summit, and Mikhail Gorbachev, the president of Green Cross International, launched a new Earth Charter Initiative as a civil society undertaking. A secretariat for the project was established at the Earth Council in Costa Rica, which Strong had created to pursue the unfinished business of the Summit.

The executive director of the Earth Council was Maximo Kalaw, Jr., who had been an outstanding civil society leader of the environmental movement in the Philippines and was co-chair of the International NGO Forum at the Rio Earth Summit. A deeply spiritual man dedicated to economic and social justice for all and environmental conservation, Maximo Kalaw played a major role in organizing the Earth Charter movement, and he made invaluable contributions to the drafting process. In addition, under the leadership of the Philippines Institute for Alternative Futures (PIAF), a Filipino People's Earth Charter was prepared in 1995 as a formal contribution to the new international Earth Charter consultation process. This document, which contains a powerful spiritual and ethical vision rooted in the indigenous Filipino concept of Kabuuan, was signed by President Ramos, members of the Philippine council for sustainable development, and local government officials. As a result, the Philippines became the first nation to have a national Earth Charter recognized by its government. In addition, the Filipino People's Earth Charter contains an eloquent and concise expression of many of the widely shared ethical values that would eventually be incorporated in the international Earth Charter.

At the end of 1996 an Earth Charter Commission was created with leaders from twenty-one different countries from all regions of the world and a drafting committee was formed. Hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals became involved. Earth Charter national committees were formed in fifty nations, including the Philippines. Meetings were held throughout the world and on the internet. Both grassroots community leaders, including indigenous peoples, and experts in the fields of international law, science, religion, ethics, human rights, the international women's movement, and other areas were involved.

There were many lengthy and complex debates in the course of the drafting process. Some wanted a very short Earth Charter with a few very general principles. Others wanted a more substantive document. There were lively discussions about, for example, the use of the term "sustainable development," the name "Earth" with a capital "E", God-language, the concept of reproductive health care, the principle of gender equality, the wording of the precautionary principle, rights language with reference to animals, and the word "compassion" in relation to animals. Many drafts of the Earth Charter were circulated, and the formulation of the principles went through endless revisions.

In and through the give and take of the consultation and drafting process, the organizational structures and wording of the Earth Charter gradually took form. The text builds on and extends international law in the fields of environmental conservation and sustainable development and endeavors to articulate the consensus on shared values taking form in the emerging global civil society. The final document has a Preamble, sixteen main principles, 61 supporting principles, and a conclusion entitled, "The Way Forward." The sixteen main principles are divided into four parts, and the titles of these four parts indicate the broad and inclusive nature of the Earth Charter vision.

Part I Respect and Care for the Community of Life
Part II Ecological Integrity
Part III Social and Economic Justice
Part IV Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace
At the heart of the Earth Charter lies an ethic of respect and care for the community of life as a whole as indicated in the title of Part I. The greater community of life is inclusive of all peoples and all living beings.

The Earth Charter expands the ethical vision dominant in modern industrial technological society in a three-fold fashion. First, it seeks to deepen commitment to the human rights and human development of all the world's peoples, especially the poor, the vulnerable, and oppressed. In this regard, it also promotes participatory, transparent, and accountable democratic governance and gender equality. Second, its goal is to awaken a new commitment to the human rights and well-being of future generations. Third, its goal is to promote recognition that all life forms are interdependent members of the one community of life on Earth and all are worthy of respect and moral consideration.

There are two reasons to respect the larger living world. The first is an anthropocentric reason. We are dependent on the goods and services provided by Earth's ecosystems. It is, therefore, in our self-interest to protect and restore ecosystems. Second, as affirmed by the World Charter for Nature and the Convention on Biological Diversity, all life forms have value regardless of their utilitarian value to people. In the words of the Filipino People's Earth Charter, "all life is interconnected, sacred, and of intrinsic value." It is for this reason that the greater community of life and each life form is worthy of moral

consideration. As the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development puts it: "the case for the conservation of nature should not rest only with development goals. It is part of our moral obligation to other living beings and future generations."

It is quite probable that unless societies come to respect nature for itself as well as for its utilitarian value to people, it will not be possible to generate the change in human behavior necessary to achieve sustainability. In this regard, it is worth noting that a moral concern for all living beings is not a new idea. It is part of the teachings of indigenous people. It is supported by the Jain, Hindu, and Buddhist traditions. It can be found in the teachings of a number of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic theologians. Stated theologically, people do not have a right to destroy what God has created. The problem is that this ethical principle has been ignored or rejected by modern industrial technological society, which views nature apart from culture as merely a collection of resources that exists to be exploited by people. In the view of the Earth Charter, nature may be used but not abused. It should be respected and protected.

Sometimes the Earth Charter is described as a declaration of global interdependence and universal responsibility. The concept of universal responsibility was brought to the attention of the drafting committee by the Dalai Lama. The Earth Charter adopted the term in part because it complements the idea of universal human rights. We all have rights and with those rights go responsibilities. Our responsibilities, of course, are common but differentiated depending on our situations and capacities. In addition, since we live in a world where everything is interconnected, each one of us is to one degree or another responsible to all other beings for how we live and act. In this sense, too, our responsibility is universal. This idea is expressed clearly in the Preamble of the Earth Charter, which states that if we are to build a sustainable world community, "it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations." The Johannesburg Declaration, issued by the WSSD in 2002, contains an almost identical affirmation of universal responsibility.

The Earth Charter principles culminate with a vision of a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace. The peace principle comes last –in Principle 16—because building a culture of peace requires implementation of all the other principles. Peace is described as "the wholeness created by right relationship with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part." (16f) This is the spirit of Kabuuan, if I understand it correctly.

Since the Earth Charter was formally launched at the Peace Palace in The Hague in June 2000, it has been translated into 28 languages and disseminated around the world. The document has been endorsed by over 2,000 NGOs and by several hundred individual cities as well as the International Council of Local Environmental Initiatives. The Earth

Charter Secretariat is now headed by Mirian Vilela of Brazil and is affiliated with the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica.

The World Resources Institute is designing a new guidebook and computer software program to assist local governments with developing goals, targets, and strategies for the implementation of Earth Charter principles. The software program known as EarthCAT can also be used to develop measurable indicators for assessing the progress being made in reaching goals and implementing principles. These materials will greatly enhance the practical and educational value of the Earth Charter. EarthCAT will be tested in cities around the world and will be available for wide use in 2005. The Vice Mayor of Baguio City, Betty Lourdes F. Tabanda, serves on an international advisory committee for EarthCAT.

In another development, the UNESCO General Conference of member states endorsed the Earth Charter in 2003 as "an important ethical framework for sustainable development" and as "an educational tool." This is especially significant because UNESCO has been appointed by the UN General Assembly as the lead agency in organizing and directing the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development that begins in 2005. In addition, UNESCO has chosen to emphasize the importance of teaching and learning about the values and life styles that communities must embrace, if they are to make the transition to sustainable development. In this regard, UNESCO is planning to recommend the Earth Charter as a valuable ethical guide and teaching tool. The Earth Charter is already being used widely in schools, colleges, and universities. Its endorsement by UNESCO and its links with the Decade will greatly increase its educational use.

A strong emphasis on education has been one of the missing elements in international strategies designed to promote the transition to sustainable development. The Decade provides a unique opportunity for schools, universities, businesses, local communities, NGOs, and governments to collaborate in integrating sustainable development theory and practice into both formal and non-formal educational programs and into the operation of the related institutions. With UNESCO's emphasis on values, the Decade is also an opportunity for communities to focus attention on the ethics of sustainable living and the new, emerging global ethics. I urge all of you at the University of the Philippines, Ateneo de Manila University, and Miriam College to support and implement the goals of the Decade.

V. Global Ethics and the Religions

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to share with you a few reflections on the role of the religions in promoting global ethics and building a just, sustainable and peaceful world. Even though in some parts of the developed world such as Europe the

influence of organized religion is declining, in much of the world the religions have a major influence on people's ethical values. It is, therefore, clear that if a global ethic is to be widely supported and implemented, the religions have an important leadership role to play.

The spiritual situation facing the religions in this age of globalization involves a new and profound challenge. Every great civilization has produced its own distinctive form of religious and ethical consciousness. Each of the great religions is the product, then, of a distinct geographical region and a particular culture or complex of cultures which it in turn has molded. In this sense all the religions are historically conditioned, each in a different way. Now, a new planetary civilization is beginning to emerge, and it is interconnecting all cultures. The communications, transportation, and economic systems that are creating this global society are expressions of industrial-technological society. In order for this new planetary civilization to fully realize its potential, it must generate a spiritual and ethical consciousness consistent with its geographical, ecological, intellectual, social, and economic situation. The global ethics movement and the Earth Charter are part of the quest for a spirituality and ethics adequate to this challenge. The objective is to give to the emerging global consciousness the spiritual depth—the faith and wisdom—needed to build a just, sustainable, and peaceful world community and to protect the integrity of Earth's ecological systems. In and through this process, the modern world created by science, technology, and globalization has an opportunity to find its spiritual center.

The spirituality connected to the new planetary consciousness is stirring people throughout the world. In making these observations, however, I am not predicting or recommending creation of a new institutional religion. The hope is that each of the world's great religions will adopt a planetary consciousness that involves an awareness of global interdependence, acceptance of religious diversity, commitment to interfaith dialogue, support for planetary ethics, and dedication to interreligious cooperation in pursuit of world community. This is a vision of unity in the midst of rich cultural and religious diversity. Its realization will require religious organizations to abandon religious exclusivism and imperialistic religious ambitions. A religion transformed by a planetary spiritual awareness will embrace an ethic of respect for other traditions and an openness to learn from others while remaining faithful to its own particularity. It will seek the divine as the spiritual center of the greater community of life in all its cultural and biological diversity. It will pursue spiritual disciplines that involve a quest for purity of heart and clarity of mind. It will embrace a practical ethic that is world affirming and life affirming and that expresses itself in and through compassion, love, tolerance, justice, environmental protection, and peace.

Most of the elements of such a religious orientation can be found somewhere in the teachings of each of the major world religions. The urgent need is to identify, elevate and develop these ideas and values and to free them from other contradictory teachings. In the

Christian tradition, for example, this means giving fresh attention to the spiritual practice and vision of a figure like St. Francis of Assisi. In and through the process of reflecting critically on its traditions and reconstructing them, each of the religions will in its own distinctive way move toward realizing the ideal of a fully evolved religion. The world will then be blessed with, for example, Buddhist, Confucian, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, and Islamic forms of a planetary spiritual and ethical consciousness. This process of transformation necessarily involves interfaith dialogue because a major part of the task is identifying shared ethical values and cooperating with other religions in building the kind of world community that is needed. This is not to deny that there will continue to be some important differences regarding ethical and religious issues, but the debate should go on within a culture of peace.

We should have no illusions about how difficult it is for the religions to change and adapt to the new global situation, because their beliefs and practices are tied to what each considers sacred tradition and divine revelation. However, if the religions, who pride themselves on being the keepers of humanity's spiritual values, cannot establish mutual understanding, tolerance, and peace among each other, how will they ever provide the world with the spiritual guidance that it so desperately needs? In this regard, it is important to remember that the history of religion is a story of ongoing transformation and dramatic innovation as well as resistance to change. Vatican II is a very good example. Many religious leaders today, such as the Pope and the Dalai Lama, have affirmed the need for a planetary ethic, and they are promoting care for the global environment as well as social and economic justice. Here in the Philippines, many spiritual leaders have engaged these issues, and some have endorsed the Earth Charter as have hundreds of religious organizations world wide. We are living in a time of great religious as well as economic and social change.

In conclusion, as Maximo Kalaw understood so well, civil society has a critical role to play in the transition to sustainable development. The new global civil society has become a third force along with government and business on the world stage. It can use its soft power together with its political power at the ballot box and its purchasing power in the market place to move the world toward constructive change. However, this will not happen without a unifying ethical vision and a new commitment to education for sustainable development on the part of schools, colleges, universities, and religious organizations.

It is good to remember, as the world has gathered for the Olympics in Athens that the tradition of higher education began there as well as the Olympics. Furthermore, Plato, its founder, was very clear that the central concern of education should be a rigorous intellectual inquiry into the nature of the good life. Today universities need to ask: What is the good life in an increasingly interdependent world? Elevating this question in the contemporary university can introduce a coherence in education that is too often

fragmented and disjointed at a time when holistic thinking, ethical clarity, and a new sense of universal responsibility are our urgent needs.