

The Earth Charter Launch

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Your Majesty, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the Dutch Government, I must express a great sense of gratitude for the choice, which the Earth Charter Commission has made in choosing this particular place, this particular gathering, this particular moment for presenting the Earth Charter. This particular place, because indeed as has been said earlier, this is a temple of peace. It has been the place where many hopes have always been brought forth. Also the company, Your Majesty, indeed you have been for many years, as well as many of us know, involved in a process of change: the willingness to combine the economy with the ecology and the willingness to give new hope, and we appreciate your presence here amongst us.

As a former participant in the Rio process, I know that under the leadership of Maurice Strong, who was then Under Secretary General of the Rio Conference, we aimed high. The effort was, maybe, Rio 1992, we can have a Charter. It didn't quite succeed. It was possible to establish the Rio Declaration. But the vision and the drive behind it, first Maurice Strong, Mikhail Gorbachev, but not to forget our former Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, whose leadership was very instrumental in his many years as Prime Minister, went beyond, and their perseverance brought us to this day.

The moment has arrived and we have to be grateful for this document. It is a document of ethical values; it is a document for reflection; but I think, indeed, we must be moved by the last speaker, the youngest here. It is the moment, where indeed, words have to be turned into action and all of us, who have been engaged for many years, in the day to day business of government, we know, that reality is sometimes stronger than the hopes we have. But without consciousness, without the sense of reflection, without the hope that we work for future generations, the work of today cannot succeed. And it is against that background that this document of consciousness is so important, because it gives a sense of mission and also it gives a sense of democracy, because I think it was indeed Maurice Strong, you who said, it is a bottom-up document. A bottom-up document, which is not simply being imposed by leaders, although leadership is necessary. It is a document which started in movements around the world and again those who were in Rio, remember, that next to the official conference, there were thousands of NGOs present, who stimulated, and who drove, and I think it is this moment of fruition that indeed we can cherish.

On behalf of the Dutch Government, I do pledge that we will work in the continued period, towards the changes of production and consumption to which Mikhail Gorbachev referred. The changes of production and consumption where indeed the lifestyles of nations are involved, and if leadership can not come from the industrialized world, where can it come from?

This document, this Earth Charter will be presented at the Rio + 10 Conference in 2002 and we do hope that the world will be moving one step further, beyond 1992, because indeed, we have entered a new millennium, a millennium with new hope, with of new generation. The Millennium Summit will take place in a couple of months and we cannot yet know what will be the outcome. One thing is very clear: the UN Secretary General, has established an agenda, which reflects all the hope of the Earth Charter; it speaks of globalization, it speaks of interdependence, it speaks of peace and social justice and the necessity that minorities will be taken as seriously as majorities, and all these concepts come together in the Earth Charter.

So, once more, ladies and gentlemen, with a great sense of gratitude, I thank you for being present today. I thank you, Your Majesty. I thank the Co-Chairs and members of the Earth Charter Commission. This is a very important moment and we are very grateful that you chose The Hague, the capital of The Netherlands. I am sorry, seat of government of The Netherlands. But it is a kind of capital after all, let's not forget that. It is with this sense that I would like to turn the chair back to you, Mr. Lubbers.