

## **Framework for the Earth Charter**

Maximo Kalaw

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I am very happy to be here with this group of distinguished leaders in the Women's Movement to see how the Earth Charter, and the Women's Movement can come together. More than anything, I'm here to learn from you.

You will by this time have received what we call the Earth Charter Benchmark Draft, which was created by a group process and which is now being handled by an Earth Charter Commission. The on-going consultation process is being headed by Steven Rockefeller, who is putting the revised principles together.

I'd like to talk about how the Earth Council looks at the Earth Charter and what the Council envisions for it. I'd also like to talk about the process of creating a movement and the process of getting people to feel they "own" the Charter so that it becomes truly a people's charter.

The Charter is a set of eighteen principles. More important, the Charter defines a vision, a vision that should guide humanity for the twenty-first century. The Charter must be a living and dynamic document that is relevant to our times *and* the future.

The Earth Charter must become an underlying framework, a values framework for sustainable development, which is the mission of the Earth Council. We need what I'm calling a "values operating system." If you are familiar with computer language, I'd like to compare this to Windows 95 which lays down the framework for you to operate the software for agriculture, for resource management, for land use planning.

The Charter has a formidable task. It needs to bridge major gaps. It needs to bridge the gap between the individual and society and between public interest and private interest. It also needs to bridge the gap between society and nature as well as bridging the gap between ecology and economics.

As you know, ecological processes are often not in synch with economic processes. In fact, they're often basically destructive of one another. There's often a big gap between the political orientation of politicians and the people's will. This sad fact has given rise to NGOs-and to civil society-taking on the task of defining the norms of public interest which the state has not been able to define properly. The state has too often left out or marginalized women, entire communities, and ecosystems.

And lastly, the Charter needs to bridge the gap between inner and "outer" ecology. We are now aware that everything is interconnected, that what we consume and what we throw away impacts on society and on politics. The livelihood we pursue impacts on society. Bridging our inner self and our social and political self is a critical aspect of creating a system that values justice, peace, equality, equity, and all of the things that we have defined in various movements, including women's movements, social movements, labor movements, and so on.

Now when we think of how we are to achieve our goals and at the same time create a movement, we must look at the values in the Charter as an "ecology" of values, not as separate values. We must evolve a dynamic whole and give life to a dynamic vision of who we are, how we relate to each other and nature, how our work relates to us, and what the process is for governing ourselves.

How are we to manage change so that change becomes evolutionary and reaches the higher levels of being and higher levels of meaning that our own species has been created for?

As far as the Earth Council is concerned, we look at the Charter as a basic manifesto of principles, and sustainable development as the next revolutionary praxis. Because it involves various layers of action, sustainable development requires changes in personal behavior. In other words, how do we relate to society and how do we govern ourselves? This question has a political dimension and, at bottom, it has a very deep spiritual dimension.

If we look at the basic lesson from sustainable development or the ecological movement, it is that everything is interconnected and that life is sacred. When you look at all great religious traditions, this is an affirmation, a basic fundamental teaching, whether it be the Buddhist, the Christian, or the Islamic tradition. Therefore, the Earth Charter movement has to be deeply spiritual and must deal with both inner and outer ecologies.

The values the Charter upholds must be expressed in three major dimensions. First, it must affirm our identity-our spiritual identity, our cultural identity, our biological identity, our political identity, and our identity as core evolutionary actors in the process. Second, it must address relationship values which are of a different nature, relationships between man and society, ecology and economics, state and governance. It must express this in very concrete terms to be operational. Third, the Charter must express values in terms of process-how we make decisions, how we share information, how we transform

conflicts into higher levels of integration. The Charter must create that process of transformation and define it in value terms.

So we're looking now at a Charter that is holistic in the sense that it defines identity, it defines relationship, and it defines this process of our changing ourselves and our evolving. It is not a static document that is simply an enumeration of very good principles.

Now, in terms of the consultations that we're having, how do we initiate this change process? There are two levels of consultation. One is a consultation on the text itself. At this point I feel that this type of consultation is more a back burner issue in the sense that if you have meetings of people discussing a text, you will have as many variations as you have people.

What I think we ought to do now concern the second stage of the process, which to me is more valuable: it's the valuing consultation. How do these values reflect in terms of people's lives, in terms of their livelihood, in terms of the organizations they join, in terms of how they communicate, and in terms of the political advocacy they undertake for the public interest?

So the next phase of this consultation, what I call the valuing process, targets basically six major areas. First is the national development program: the national councils for sustainable development. There are about 70 countries that have this kind of formation in different degrees of cohesiveness and power, but the mechanism is there. We're going to start this whole process in the US on October 9th, in Washington.

Second, we would like the Charter to be consulted by professional groups so that these Charter principles become an integral part of the work ethics of doctors, of lawyers, of engineers, and of all professionals.

Third, we would like to focus on the institutions, the formal and informal educational institutions, so that they design a values training curriculum and a pedagogy for teaching the values of the Earth Charter.

Fourth, we would like to bring together church leaders because, although most of the church groups have signed onto the Charter, we have not seen them implementing it by such means, for example, as pastoral letters instructing the faithful. We want to see the Charter become part of the teachings and not just an endorsement.

Then, fifth, we would like to bring the networks of NGOs together so that the Earth Charter values inform the public interest advocacy of NGOs and NGO networks.

And lastly, it is our aim that the Earth Charter values should become part of popular culture. This is a little more difficult. We're trying to get writers of TV programs to start at least mentioning some of the concepts of the Charter. I don't think that we can arrive at a living Charter solely from a "conferencing" or an intellectual discussion. A living

Charter has to come from the dialogue or the consultation with what I'm calling the exiled self-all the various levels and resources of the self. And I think that we have a special opportunity now that we have come to see that "the personal is political."

We have, of course, the Buddhist system. We also have the Christian/Islamic tradition that we can bring to the fore.

I'm often asked, what is the correct way to proceed: Should it be bottom up or top down? I think neither one is adequate. This process requires an inner-outer dimension. In the Philippine tradition, we have a saying that in each and every person there is a loob, an inner self, where the heavens and the earth come together. And this is the only space where one can speak a truth for all. I think the planning and the consultation process should be from one inner loob to another and back again. Only then can we reach the inner and outer ecology and look at a system that brings together our faith, our life, and our institutions.