

**The Earth Charter Launch**  
**The Hague, The Netherlands**  
June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2000

**FEDERICO MAYOR**  
**Earth Charter Commissioner**  
**President, Foundation for a Culture of Peace, Spain**

In the Peace Palace of The Hague, 29 June, 2000, Mikhail Gorbachev, who made a radical change in the geopolitical map of the world and gave a new horizon. Maurice Strong, Ruud Lubbers, Steven Rockefeller, all our recognition for what you have done, together, in this Earth Charter. I would like also to remember those that are not known, that are less visible. Many people have been working, sometimes in the morning trying to give their contribution for the drafting of the Earth Charter. To all of them our gratitude.

Everyday 66 million barrels of oil are burned. Every day the capacity of the re-uptake of the greenhouse gases effect are decreased. Every day more than 2 billion dollars are invested in armament. Every day 254 thousand new brothers and are born, every 4 days one million more people on this space vessel, The Earth.

It is for all these reasons that in 1992 in Rio it was decided to create “a document” that will provide a universally valid ethical framework for addressing issues on environmental degradation, poverty, conflict and justice.

Poverty, conflict and justice, as you would say key words, and to share common values, principles and goals. Yes, this was the seed that was planted in 1992, and today we are starting a second phase. Because this launching is not only to say: well, now we have the Earth Charter, but now, we must disseminate and now we must pass from the deeds to action.

What is the significance for the Earth Charter? I think sincerely, as it has been said by Ruud Lubbers, that we are in a moment of action. It is time for action. And at a national level I think that it will be easier. Because at a national level, we will have a democratic frame, then we have the voice of the people, we have the civil society, we have the NGOs, we have the media. The media has an immense responsibility in the dissemination, in the public awareness. We have the parliaments. We must be in closer relation with the parliaments. The parliaments should devote one day to discuss the Earth Charter, because they are the representatives of the citizens. Therefore, at this level, I think that we can now come from the declarations to action. But the problem is the international frame.

There is not today an ethical, legal frame such that those that contravene these principles are punished - and there is no democracy if there is impunity. For example the Pinochet case is very clear: if there is impunity, there is no democracy. This is true at the worldwide level and the same for environmental issues. What can we do? We must

reinforce the United Nations, instead of weakening the United Nations, which is what we are doing. We are considering the United Nations only for peace keeping, after the conflict, or for humanitarian assistance. No, the Charter says: “we the peoples”, not “we the states” or “we the governments”. “We the people” have decided to save our children from the horror of the war.

Therefore, let us, at the same time that at a national level we enjoy the facilities of democracy, let us reinforce democracy at the international level. This democratic frame, that is only, the United Nations, we can not accept what is happening: that a group of countries is giving the guidance for the whole world. This, according to the Greek origin of the word, is called Plutocracy or Oligarchy, and this we do not want. We like democracy, not Plutocracy, at the worldwide level.

You perhaps remember the Leonardo D’vinci image: many centuries ago, he said that when the waters are up all those that are in the boat, in one ship, if there is the danger of sinking: there are no more black or white, men or women, rich or poor, young or elder, suddenly there are only passengers that share a common destiny.

I think that this image is today the image of the world at the beginning of this millennium century. And I would like to conclude with a reflection on the seeds that you mentioned, because I would like to repeat to the young people that it is true that many seeds that you plant do not give fruit, this is true unfortunately, and we are doing our best in order that more give fruit, but there is one thing that is very clear: you will never have the fruit of the seeds that you have not planted.