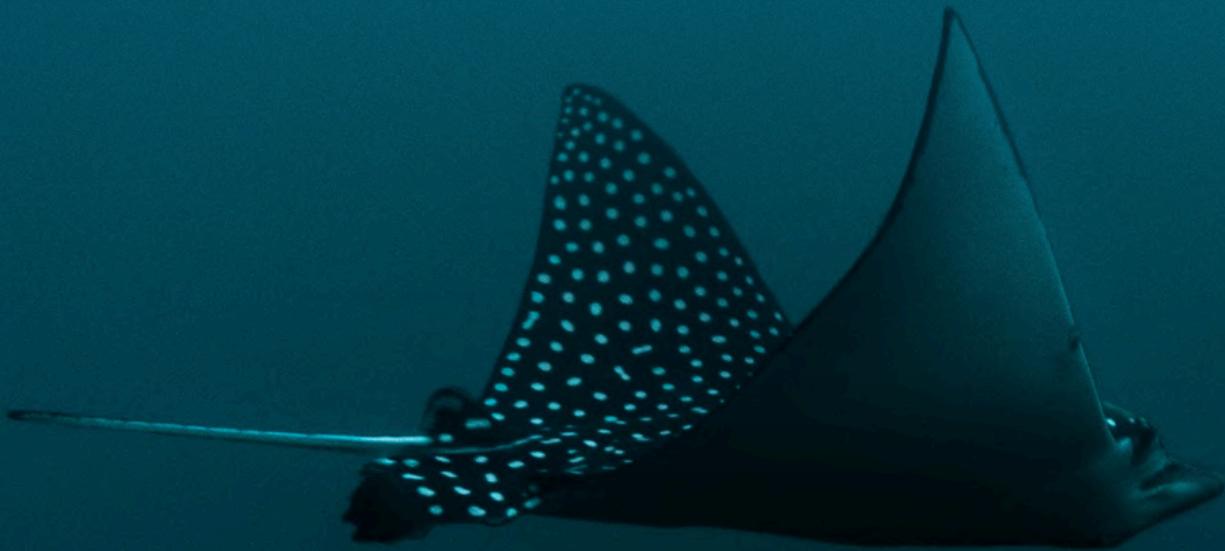


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# Earth Charter Magazine

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## **EARTH CHARTER MAGAZINE VOL. V JUNE 2025**

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# INTRODUCTION

In the fifth edition of the Earth Charter Magazine, we have the opportunity to hear from scholars and activists across the globe, from diverse fields and contexts, as they offer reflections on the Earth Charter, and what it means in our world today. Whether coming from the perspective of international law, education, business, or spirituality, authors explore the Earth Charter both as a mirror through which we reflect our past and present, and as a tool which guides sustainability into the future.

Klaus Bosselmann and Prue Taylor have both been involved in the Earth Charter movement for over 30 years, offering significant contribution in research and advocacy on the Earth Charter as a soft law instrument. They guide us through their article on the what and why of Earth Trusteeship, and how the Earth Charter serves as the groundwork basis for this innovative effort and concept. They see the Earth Charter as an instrument in healing the broken relationship between humanity and nature.

Heather Eaton, a scholar in the field of ecology, feminism and theology, and who has been using the Earth Charter in her teaching, reflects on 25 years of the Earth Charter in her article. She emphasizes the Earth Charter as a call for action, a call for hope, and a call for a shared sustainable vision for the future.

Nnaemeka Phil Eke-okocha reflects on his journey as a young climate leader enriched by the Earth Charter, and emphasizes the ethical dimensions of environmental challenges. He explores in his article how climate change, especially in Africa, intersects with security, justice, and intergenerational equity. His piece calls for a shift in global consciousness, highlighting the importance of leadership by young people, grounded in empathy, inclusion, and sustainability.

Ainhoa Garayar Erró shares her experience in designing an experimental and experiential master's degree programme at the University of the Basque Country with an innovative approach that seeks to align students' inner transformation with the core principles of sustainability. In the programme, she draws significant inspiration from the holistic vision and universal values enshrined in the Earth Charter.

Fray Erick Marin discusses St. Francis of Assisi's hymn of praise and thanksgiving for creation "Canticles of the Creatures", composed 800 years ago, exploring its linkages to the principles of the Earth Charter and its significance in our world today.

Laura Maria Rodriguez Uribe offers an overview of the research she did with the aim to identify the key features shaping the integration of biodiversity into businesses' sustainability strategies, as well as to understand the barriers and drivers' companies face when adopting biodiversity-related strategies in Latin America. She reflects on her findings in reference to the importance of the ethical foundations of the Earth Charter.

This issue features photographs from Somos Pelagos, a Costa Rican collective championing ocean restoration through community action. We would like to express our gratitude for their contribution to the Earth Charter magazine, and for their incredible ongoing projects to promote environmental awareness and participation.

We hope this issue will inspire readers to reflect on their own journeys, and to look forwards into the future with hope, and with a strong commitment to continue to act for sustainability, ecological integrity, and justice.

MIRIAN VILELA, MARIA SOSA SEGNINI,  
AND HELENE SALESKA  
**EDITORIAL TEAM**





# Somos Pelagos: A Fusion of Science, Art, and Ocean Conservation

<https://www.somospelagos.com/>

The International Collective Pelagos Océanos is a Costa Rican group made up of scientists, artists, and activists working to protect and restore the ocean by integrating scientific knowledge with art and community engagement. Guided by the belief that real change begins with each individual and is strengthened through collective action, their work promotes environmental awareness, ocean education, and concrete action.

For Pelagos, art is more than just a communication tool: it is a way to transform emotions, values, and cultures. As expressed in their core message, “It’s easy to believe we are just waves and forget that we are also the ocean.” Through visual campaigns, sustainability consulting, and marine monitoring technologies, they are building an ocean culture where conservation is practiced with responsibility, beauty, and hope.

Among their current initiatives is a communication and awareness campaign about the deep ocean called Unknown Costa Rica. It focuses on bringing the deep-sea marine biodiversity closer to the public through artistic interventions, talks, and social events. The collective has also spent the last three years advancing ocean observation technologies in coastal environments and, more recently, in the open ocean. This initiative, called the Ocean Technologies Network - CR, involves local stakeholders and decision-makers in deploying marine technologies such as buoys and profiling floats, emphasizing the importance of having these tools accessible in Costa Rica and the region.

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In recent years, they have also developed science and conservation communication campaigns, such as #1000CoralsxCR, which promoted reef restoration in the Golfo Dulce through coral planting, participatory science, and artistic expression. Similarly, through audiovisual projects like United for Golfo Dulce, From Mountain to Sea, and Rainforest Heroes, they share the stories of children and local leaders who live in deep connection with the sea.

Pelagos doesn’t wait for change—it drives it with commitment and action. With each coral planted, each story told, and each community strengthened, they invite everyone to reconnect with the ocean—not as a distant resource, but as a living reflection of our identity and shared responsibility.



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## With the Earth Charter towards Earth Trusteeship



Klaus Bosselmann

Klaus Bosselmann is Professor of Environmental Law and Founding Director of the New Zealand Centre for Environmental Law at the University of Auckland. He has advised the UN, OECD, EU, and various governments, and contributed to major international agreements including the UN Climate Change Convention and the Earth Charter. He has published extensively on environmental ethics, law, and governance, including *Ecological Approaches to Environmental Law* (2017), co-authored with Prue Taylor.



Prue Taylor

Prue Taylor is a legal scholar specializing in environmental and planning law at the University of Auckland's School of Architecture and Planning. She is Deputy Director of the NZ Centre for Environmental Law and a member of the IUCN Commission of Environmental Law. A long-time advocate for the Earth Charter, she authored the award-winning book *An Ecological Approach to International Law*, and received an IUCN award in 2007 for her work on law, ethics, and climate change.



## 1. The broken relationship between humans and nature

Twenty-five years ago, the Earth became the subject of a charter. A charter is an official document outlining the values, rights and responsibilities of a group to which it is given. Accordingly, the Earth Charter defines the values and principles that all people of Earth, our home, must follow. As its Preamble states, “it is imperative that we as people of Earth declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.”

Implied in this statement is the notion that humans are part of the community of life, not separate from it, and therefore responsible for the well-being of non-humans and Earth as a whole. In the Anthropocene [1], this is of critical importance.

From a legal point of view, the question arises how such a responsibility can be formulated and incorporated. We must ask, therefore, how can humanity speak and act for the benefit of non-humans and indeed of Earth as a whole? In law, the typical tool for allowing someone to speak on behalf, and in the interest of, those who cannot speak for themselves is the concept of trusteeship. This legal concept also imposes legally enforceable duties upon the trustees, holding them to account for actions. As inhabitants of the Earth, it falls upon us “individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions” [2] to see ourselves as trustees of the Earth and act

accordingly. Likewise, our political institutions should be acting as Earth trustees. [3]

Essentially, the global climate and ecological crisis is a symptom of the broken relationship between humans and nature. This has both, negative and positive implications. The threat for humanity is existential and undeniable, at stake is nothing less than our collective survival. On the positive, humanity has never been in a better position to realize the consequences of human action and that human well-being depends on the well-being of Earth as a whole. In other words, humans and nature are inextricably connected. This shift of awareness calls for effective Earth governance including more effective international environmental law. [4] Current international environmental law fails to protect and restore the Earth’s ecological systems. It can be summarized as fragmented and a mix of good intentions and weak obligations, with virtually no means of enforcement.

A foundational document for international environmental law is the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. [5] Article 2 reads: “States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies [...]” This reveals the traditional Western property paradigm! Like a private owner of land, the nation state has the undisturbed right to exploit its territory.



The second half of Article 2, however, says that states have “the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.” Furthermore, Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration reads: “States shall co-operate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem.” Do these principles qualify state sovereignty and create an obligation of states to protect the global environment and the integrity of the Earth System?

The answer is no. Under current international environmental law, states have no legally enforceable obligation to protect the natural environment within or beyond their boundaries. There is only an expectation to ‘consider’ - but not necessarily avoid – potentially disastrous environmental consequences of a state's action or inaction. Only negotiated treaties and fundamental principles of international law can change this, but so far, all treaties have failed to articulate the logic of legally

enforceable state responsibility for the Earth. Nor have general principles like precaution, sustainability or future generational equity made a real difference. For effective protection and restoration of the Earth System, a deliberate, bold move towards Earth trusteeship is needed.

## 2. Earth trusteeship

There is an ever-growing ecological movement that has found legal expression in Earth jurisprudence, Earth law and ecological law [6]. Some recent developments give us a sense of just how significant this legal movement has been. In 2016, one hundred professors of environmental law adopted a manifesto called “From Environmental Law to Ecological Law” at the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law Colloquium in Oslo, Norway. The “Oslo Manifesto” [7] led to the establishment of the Ecological Law and Governance Association (ELGA) [8] in 2017. ELGA is a global network of lawyers and environmental activists that coordinates initiatives for transforming current law and governance.

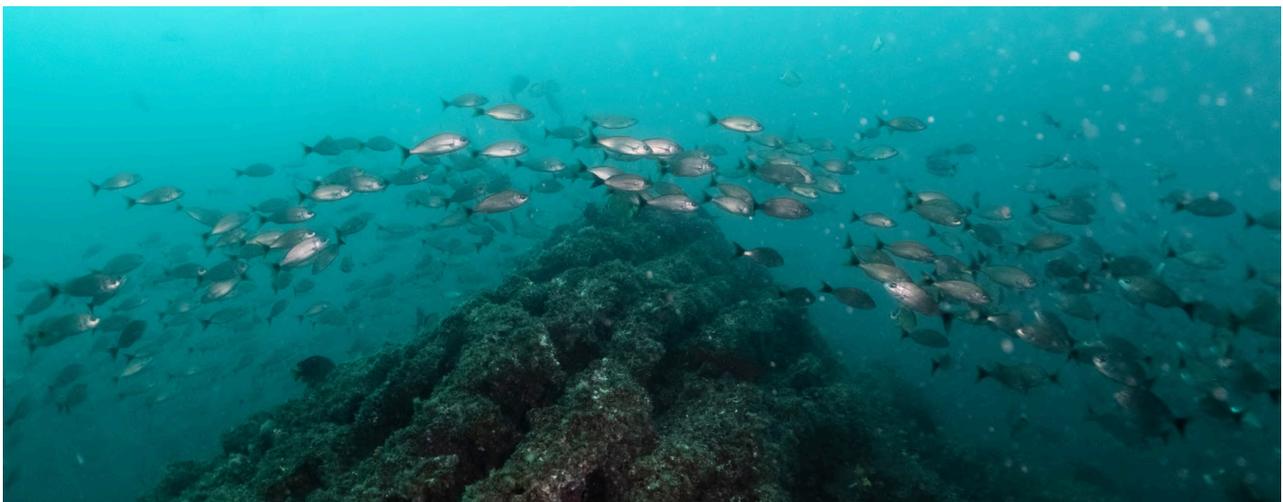


Photo Credit: Pelagos



One of these initiatives is the Earth Trusteeship Initiatives (ETI) [9], established on 10 December 2018 in the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. This day marked the 70th anniversary of the adoption of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. With the support and endorsement of many human rights, indigenous rights, environmental and professional organizations, the ETI launched the “Hague Principles for a Universal Declaration on Responsibilities for Human Rights and Earth Trusteeship.” [10]

The three “Hague Principles” set out the framework for Earth trusteeship. All rights that human beings enjoy depend on responsibilities that we have for each other and, crucially, for the Earth. We cannot live in dignity and well-being without accepting fundamental duties for each other and for Earth. These are trusteeship duties. We must understand ourselves as “People for Earth” [11] or trustees of Earth. As citizens of our respective countries, we must demand our governments also to accept Earth trusteeship duties. State sovereignty now implies obligations as trustees of human rights [12] and the Earth [13].



Photo Credit: Pelagos

The case for Earth trusteeship can be summarized in this way:

*“The ethics of stewardship or guardianship for the community of life is one of the most foundational concepts in the history of humanity. It is inherent in the teachings of the world’s religions and the traditions of indigenous peoples and is, an integral part of humanity’s cultural heritage. Yet, our political and legal institutions have not taken Earth ethics to heart. The Earth as an integrated whole may be featuring in images, in science and in ethics, but does not feature in law. Earth and the areas outside national jurisdictions [the global commons] are considered as res nullius, a legal nullity without inherent rights. Not that Earth cares about such rights. We humans must choose to care about them. If we keep ignoring them, then basically we are saying that the Earth system doesn’t really matter. We take it for granted - like sunshine and rain - and of no relevance to the system of law that govern us in societies and states. Given that the ethics of earth stewardship are widely accepted today we should be ready for taking the next step: Earth trusteeship.*

*Earth trusteeship is the essence of what Earth jurisprudence is advocating, but, more importantly, it has also been advocated in key international environmental documents. Earth trusteeship is the institutionalization of the duty to protect the integrity of ecological systems.*

*This duty is expressed in no less than 25 international agreements - from the 1982 World Charter for Nature right through to*



*the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. [14] To act on this duty 'states need to cooperate in the spirit of global partnership' as, for example, Principle 7 of the 1992 Rio Declaration says." [15]*

The case for Earth Trusteeship duties is clear and strong, yet states keep them ineffective. Only a more informed understanding of state sovereignty can change that. [16]

### **3. Importance of the Earth Charter**

The inspiration and guidance for Earth Trusteeship came from the Earth Charter. [17] The Earth Charter defines the ethical framework in the three principles of a) respect and care for the community of life, b) ecological integrity and c) social and economic justice. Correspondingly, the three Hague Principles define responsibilities a) for the Earth, b) for the community of life and c) for human rights as trusteeship obligations of all people and states.

Ongoing efforts to adopt a Global Pact for the Environment [18] provide an opportunity to include these three principles and make them legally binding. The current draft text includes important references to 'the Earth's community of life', 'the balance and integrity of Earth's ecosystem' (Preamble) and the state's duty to take care of 'conservation, protection and restoration of the integrity of the Earth's ecosystem' (Article 2). These notions are reflective of Earth Charter principles and the Hague Principles. In 2018, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the resolution "Towards a Global

Pact for the Environment" [19] by 143 votes - notably opposed by the United States and Russia. Consultations started with a Working Group to explore options and content of a possible treaty. In the end, a sufficient consensus could not be found and further consultations stalled. However, further UNGA resolutions could pave the way, in the long term, for a legally binding Global Pact for the Environment. [20]

Meanwhile, the UN Secretary General called for a "repurposing of the [UN] Trusteeship Council" to adopt environmental responsibilities. [21] This led to a report by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (HALB) in preparation of the UN Summit of the Future in September 2024. The 2023 HALB report "Breakthrough for People and Planet" stated: "Our responsibilities to current and future generations can only be met if we act in trusteeship for the planet" [22]. The Summit itself saw discussions about Earth trusteeship at various panels. The official outcome documents "Pact for the Future" and "Declaration on Future Generations" call for "transforming global governance" but contain no specific commitments towards Earth trusteeship. [23] However, the official announcement of a UN Special Envoy on Future Generations at a Sustainability Summit in Hamburg in October 2024 offers the opportunity for establishing the principles of Earth trusteeship through the work of the Envoy. [24]

Developments around the world also show trends towards Earth trusteeship governance. One example is New Zealand with its recognition of the Whanganui River



as a legal person. To ensure health and integrity of the Whanganui ecosystem, legislation appointed trustees to act on behalf and for the benefit of, the river. [25] Another example is the recognition of rights of nature in the constitution of Ecuador requiring people and institutions to preserve and restore the integrity of ecological systems. [26] In the same vein, the German Network for Rights of Nature launched the initiative towards changing the constitution. [27] The call for implementing rights of nature into the Grundgesetz [constitution] has found a strong echo in the media and legal literature. [28] In an associated initiative, the Economic and Social Committee of the European Union has received a comprehensive report towards a “EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Nature”. [29] All these and other initiatives signal a shift in the way law views nature and articulates human duties.

The Earth Charter continues to be instrumental and inspirational in healing the broken relationship between humanity and nature. It is now commonly accepted that our survival depends on the integrity of the Earth’s ecological systems. While states, transnational institutions and corporate power follow business-as-usual, citizens, civil society and the Earth Charter itself, lead the way towards transformational change. We must rethink and repair human-nature relationships by acting as trustees of Earth.



Photo Credit: Pelagos

**“The Earth Charter continues  
to be instrumental and  
inspirational in healing the  
broken relationship between  
humanity and nature”**

Klaus Bosselmann & Prue Taylor



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Photo Credit: Pelagos

## Celebrating 25 years of the Earth Charter: A Call to Action and Hope



Heather Eaton

Heather Eaton is a Professor in the Conflict Studies program at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, with a Ph.D. in Ecology, Feminism, and Theology. Her interdisciplinary work focuses on the intersections of religion, ecology, gender, peace studies, nonviolence, and animal rights. She has contributed to interfaith ecological responses and feminist theologies and explores the relationship between religion and science. Eaton is the author or editor of key works such as *The Intellectual Journey of Thomas Berry* and *Introducing Ecofeminist Theologies*. A former president of the Canadian Theological Society, she serves on editorial and academic committees related to religion and ecology. Her current research explores religion, science, and grassroots peacebuilding.



We celebrate 25+ years of the Earth Charter in 2025. What an incredible journey, over many years! From the first idea in 1987 in the Brundtland Commission Report, to the 1992 Rio Declaration and Maurice Strong and Mikhail Gorbachev collaboration to move ahead with this idea, then global consultations and drafting, to the official launch of the Earth Charter in 2000. The Earth Charter is an extraordinary contribution to fostering ethical, caring and just communities, for planetary wholeness. It provides a vision of what is needed for a flourishing Earth Community. The charter emphasizes values of democracy, justice, equity, peace and global solidarity. We all must reflect seriously on what choices need to be made for a sustainable and just future. The Earth Charter summarizes the required elements for reflection, action and hope.

There is nothing simple or naïve about these choices: [Respect and Care for the Community of Life](#), [Ecological Integrity](#), [Social and Economic Justice](#), and [Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace](#). These pillars of the Earth Charter, and the 16 principles, orient societies for a viable future. As stated in the preamble, we must: “recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” There is no other way forward.

Yet, the world is very troubled, and the choices of current world leaders are not leading us to a sustainable present or future. Patterns of production and consumption are bringing ecological devastation. Fossil fuels are disrupting climate patterns. Some political systems are becoming destabilized and bringing fascism, violence, war, and genocide, causing unfathomable human and ecological suffering. Gender and human rights are vulnerable. These troubles are bringing intergenerational injustices.

Institutions such as the United Nations, the International Criminal Court, and the NATO Alliance are under threat. Democracies are unstable with the rise of populism, right wing forces, and tyranny. These political shifts are deeply troubling, alarming, and morally unconscionable. As states the Earth Charter: [We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future.](#)

The Earth Charter reminds us that we are part of a vast evolving universe. Earth contains unimaginable and extraordinary communities of life. We belong within, and must protect, this vibrant Earth community. The ideas and methods of integral ecology can assist. Integral ecology is about ecological literacy: understanding that the social, political, educational, economic, and spiritual systems must be integrated with ecological sustainability. There is no other future.

The Earth Charter is a vision for the future, with values of democracy, justice, peace,



and ethics, fostering a pathway of integral ecology. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust. Therefore, we cannot be bystanders as the Great Earth Community declines.

Where will we get the **energy** for this work? When we are attuned with and immersed in the beauty, the elegance, ingenuity and utter power of the Earth community, we are nourished. We receive energy, insight, humility, and vigour. Thomas Berry wrote: **We are not lacking in the dynamic forces needed to create the future. We live immersed in a sea of energy beyond all comprehension** [The Great Work, 1999, p. 175].

We need **hope** for this work. Hope is not naïve optimism. Hope is a blend of anger and courage: Anger at the way things are, and courage to change them (paraphrased from St Augustine). The Earth can nurture hope. When spring emerges, we can see, feel, and taste hope in action. Trees and flowers blossom, bees pollinate, animals have offspring: these are extraordinary

feats of hope. The Earth is alive, and this nurtures hope.

I suggest we also need **spirituality**. Spirituality is not beliefs, it is a process of moving from asleep to awake, death to life, confusion to clarity, and ignorance to awareness. Spirituality educates and inspires, reinforces and revitalizes. It gives us strength, perspective, and insight. When we become aware that we are immersed in this great Earth community, it evokes a spiritual awakening: planetary consciousness.

The Earth Charter is a guide for deep, just and sustainable transformations. It awakens us to interconnected global societies that belong to and are dependent upon Earth's dynamics, processes and vitality. We need energy, hope and spirit for the work of transformation. I hope these 25+ years of journey will offer an opportunity for us to renew our commitment with this vision and the resolve to move forward fostering Planetary Consciousness, Ethics of Care, and Intergenerational Justice.



Photo Credit: Pelagos

**“When we are attuned with  
and immersed in the beauty,  
the elegance, ingenuity and  
utter power of the Earth  
community, we are  
nourished.”**

Heather Eaton



Photo Credit: Pelagos

## Living the Earth Charter: Youth Leadership for Justice and Sustainability



Nnaemeka Phil  
Eke-okocha

Nnaemeka Phil Eke-okocha is an Earth Charter Young Leader and an LSE course facilitator. Currently, he is a PhD student in Global Governance and Human Security at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Phil's research examines how climate change intersects with migration, food insecurity, health, violence, extremism, and governance to shape conflict dynamics and policy responses.



The world we live in is constantly changing, and unfortunately, not for the better. New wars are springing up in every corner of the world, populism is rising, climate change and environmental degradation are increasing, and much more. Never in our time has there been more of a need for planetary consciousness, ethics of care, and intergenerational justice than now. It is essential for our survival and the dignity of future generations.

In 2020, I was starting out as a young professional, eager to learn, share, connect with others, and, above all, be better. At the time, I was deeply concerned about the growing disconnect between global policies and the lived realities of communities facing environmental and social crises, particularly in Africa. That was when I came across Earth Charter International on the internet, and upon first reading about it, I became interested and enrolled in the [Leadership, Sustainability and Ethics \[LSE\] Course](#). From the first session, it got me thinking about the planet in a different way. The session on systems thinking opened my eyes to many things, such as how challenges are interconnected and require a systems lens to be resolved. It helped me understand how climate change, poverty, health, migration, and conflict —issues I had previously considered separately —are deeply interconnected. For instance, climate change not only affects food insecurity but can also lead to forced displacements, making various groups vulnerable.

Growing up in Nigeria, the Earth Charter's call for respect and care for the community of life resonated deeply with me, as did the need to support communities that are often on the front lines of the impact of climate change. As a young person, I witness how environmental degradation, from desertification in the north to oil pollution in the Niger Delta, disrupted livelihoods and deepened inequalities. This made me realize that environmental issues are both technical and moral challenges. As a young leader, I felt compelled to advocate for solutions rooted in empathy, inclusion, and long-term thinking.



Photo Credit: Nnaemeka Phil Eke-okocha



This motivated me to act and shaped my leadership style, with a focus on ethics. Shortly after completing the LSE Course, I founded the Adesso Development Initiative (ADI), an organization dedicated to bridging the digital divide in Nigeria and promoting sustainable development. I also explore the correlation between climate change and security in my academic life, especially in fragile regions like mine. The Earth Charter principles, especially those of ecological integrity and democracy, nonviolence, and peace, have guided my research and activism, reminding me that addressing these challenges requires more than policy shifts; it requires a shift in consciousness.

Being part of the Earth Charter has connected me to a community of fellow young changemakers and practitioners who share a common passion and vision for a just and sustainable future for all. Over the years, we have grown both individually and collectively, sharing ideas, supporting initiatives, and fostering intergenerational dialogue. The Earth Charter community has reinforced my conviction that young people are not just essential contributors but the backbone of the ethical transformation our world urgently needs.

My understanding of leadership has evolved over time through my engagement with the Earth Charter community. Leadership for me is no longer a question of power and authority, but instead a service that transcends borders and generations. My engagement with the Earth Charter has shown me that leadership

also entails a concrete commitment to upholding the dignity of all life and to ensuring that care, justice, and sustainability are at the heart of every decision.

As someone who has been working in the climate change space for the last 5 years, I have often been critical of the way climate change is portrayed, especially in global discourse. Discussion around climate change is often scientific and technical, with much of the conversation centered on emissions, carbon markets, and related topics. However, for many communities around the world, especially in fragile regions like mine, climate change is an existential threat and has a profound impact on the daily lives of many. The impact of climate change in these communities reveals deeper challenges, including governance failures, the marginalization of communities, and the value we place on the environment and human life.

During the course of my doctoral research, which focuses on climate change and security, I have observed that climate change is not solely an environmental issue but also an ethical challenge. In the Lake Chad Basin, rising temperatures and prolonged droughts have contributed to the shrinking of Lake Chad, reducing access to water, arable land, and fish stocks. This has intensified competition over scarce resources, particularly between farmers, herders, and fishing communities, resulting in recurring local conflicts. As livelihoods are disrupted, people are forced to migrate, not by choice, but for



survival. In this vacuum of opportunity, youth are increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups like Boko Haram, which exploit grievances and offer a sense of purpose or economic incentive. This illustrates the pressure traditional systems face in response to environmental changes. These are not just abstract problems and something that can be reduced to numbers. They are real and immediate, leaving millions impacted.

The Earth Charter invites us to reimagine our role on this planet, not as dominators of nature but as stewards of it. Principle 2 of the Charter calls for us to care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love. This principle is an urgent call, especially in the face of the ecological threats we are faced with. It calls for considering inclusive and just solutions that address the realities of all.

Too often in our time, those who bear the brunt of climate change's impact are overlooked in climate change policy. What is refreshing about the Earth Charter is that it brings ethics to the center of the conversation. This allows the experiences of indigenous people, displaced communities, and young people to matter. This ethical lens has shaped my perspective on several issues, including climate-induced displacement, youth participation in policy-making, and the intersection of environmental justice with human rights. It has also and how I approach my advocacy and work-prioritizing inclusion, amplifying youth and marginalized voices, and seeking just and sustainable solutions.



Photo Credit: [Vanessa](#) on [Unsplash](#)



Climate change is not just a threat; it is also an invitation. An invitation to find and engage in a planetary consciousness rooted in justice and interconnectedness. An invitation to transform how we live, consume, and govern. An invitation to align our policies and actions with the ethical vision of the Earth Charter: one that honors the dignity of all life and recognizes that true security comes from ecological balance, not dominance.

This Ethical awakening also brings us face-to-face with one of the most important questions of our time: What do we owe to future generations? As the consequences of climate change, biodiversity loss, and political instability unfold, the issue of intergenerational justice has moved from a theoretical concern to an urgent moral and policy imperative. The United Nations Pact for the Future further underscores the importance of safeguarding the needs and interests of future generations and promoting intergenerational solidarity, justice, and equity. We live in a world where both our actions and inactions have a profound impact on future generations. Therefore, it is essential that we take a bold stand to ensure the preservation of our environment.

In many parts of the world, particularly in the Global South, we young people are already paying the price of crises we did not create. From climate-induced displacement to food insecurity, young people face compounding threats. As my research on climate security in Africa has revealed, I recognize the injustice of excluding young people, whose futures are at stake, from the very processes that determine their fate.

The Earth Charter offers a moral compass for navigating this challenge. It affirms that “the dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species.” But it also reminds us that justice must be intergenerational, and that sustainability means safeguarding the conditions of life for future generations, not merely managing the present.

As a young leader, I firmly believe that intergenerational justice must be an integral part of governance. In Earth Charter Principle 4, we are called to “secure the fruits of development for present and future generations.” We are living in a unique time in history; therefore,



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**“As a young leader, I felt compelled to advocate for solutions rooted in empathy, inclusion, and long-term thinking.”**

Nnaemeka Phil Eke-okocha



this affects everything from climate adaptation and migration policy to education, energy, and economic systems. International justice is not a peripheral concern, but the foundation of a just and sustainable future. We must challenge actors to do better, as we must honor the efforts of those who came before us and strive to leave a better world for future generations.

Working in the climate space means sometimes having to grapple with difficult truths. We are constantly faced with new and emerging challenges, and most of the time, they are deeply discouraging. Around the world, we see worsening climate disasters, rising authoritarianism, and the deepening of socio-economic inequalities. In many countries, political will lags behind the urgency of the crisis. The most vulnerable continue to suffer disproportionately, and the ethical dimensions of these injustices are too often ignored.

Yet, in the face of these immense challenges, I still hold onto the hope that much can still be accomplished. One of the greatest sources of hope for me is the growing planetary consciousness among young people. I have seen firsthand the impact young people can have in championing change. Across continents, young people are demanding that ethics, justice, and sustainability become the foundation of our global systems. They are not waiting to be invited into the conversation; they are building new tables. They are reminding the world that progress without purpose is empty, and that true development must serve both people and the planet.

We still face numerous challenges stemming from a lack of political will, economic greed, and systemic inequality. Still, hope persists because transformation is not only necessary, but it is already underway. As a young leader, I remain committed to amplifying voices from the margins, challenging the status quo, and nurturing a global ethic of care. Our hopes, when rooted in action and community, can become the most powerful force for change.

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## Aligning Inner Transformation with Sustainability: A Path Inspired by the Earth Charter



Ainhoa Garayar Erro

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In a world facing unprecedented environmental and social challenges, higher education stands at a critical crossroads. The urgency of the climate crisis, growing inequality, and biodiversity loss demand a profound rethinking of how we prepare future generations to lead the way toward a sustainable future (Lozano et al., 2017). How can we equip our students not only with technical knowledge and practical skills, but also with the wisdom, compassion, and ethical commitment needed to build a more just and equitable world in harmony with nature?

In this article, we explore an innovative approach that seeks to align students' inner transformation with the core principles of sustainability, drawing inspiration from the holistic vision and universal values enshrined in the Earth Charter. We argue that inner transformation—understood as a deep shift in how we relate to ourselves, others, and the planet—is an essential component of sustainability education in the 21st century.



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The scientific literature is increasingly clear and forceful: higher education institutions have a crucial role to play in promoting sustainability (Hallinger & Nguyen, 2020). Since the early 2000s, there has been growing interest in how education can contribute to a more just and equitable future. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), promoted by UNESCO, has become a key framework for integrating sustainability into research, teaching, and institutional management (Wals, 2014).

However, despite progress in incorporating sustainability into curricula and university practices, significant challenges remain. As Lotz-Sisitka et al. (2015) point out, many sustainability programmes focus primarily on technical and scientific aspects, neglecting the human dimension and ethical values that are fundamental to driving transformative change (Mezirow, 2006).

Beyond technical skills and theoretical knowledge, it is crucial to cultivate in students a deep connection with the natural world, a sense of responsibility toward future generations, and an understanding of the interdependence of social, economic, and environmental systems (Ives et al., 2023). This is where inner transformation plays a key role as an essential catalyst for sustainable action.



## THE POWER OF INNER TRANSFORMATION: A REFLECTION OF THE EARTH CHARTER

Inner transformation refers to a deep process of change in the way we see ourselves, others, and the world around us. It involves questioning our assumptions, values, and deeply held beliefs, and developing a heightened awareness of our interconnectedness with all living beings and the systems that support life on the planet. This process resonates profoundly with the core principles of the Earth Charter, a visionary document that offers an ethical guide for building a sustainable future.

In the context of sustainability, inner transformation can help us overcome the disconnection and alienation that often prevents us from acting on behalf of the planet. By cultivating empathy, compassion, wisdom, and integrity, we can develop an intrinsic motivation to protect the environment, promote social justice, and build a more peaceful and equitable world.

The Earth Charter, with its holistic vision and call to action, invites us to:

**Respect and Care for the Community of Life:** Inner transformation helps us develop a deep connection with nature and recognize the intrinsic value of all living beings, including future generations. By cultivating humility and gratitude, we can learn to live in harmony with the natural world and protect the planet's biodiversity,

as expressed in Principle I of the Charter: "Respect Earth and life in all its diversity."

**Ecological Integrity:** Inner transformation drives us to question our patterns of consumption and production, and to adopt more sustainable lifestyles that minimize our environmental impact. By becoming more aware of our ecological footprint, we can contribute to the ecological integrity of the planet, protecting ecosystems and natural resources for future generations, in line with Principle II of the Charter: "Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love."

**Social and Economic Justice:** Inner transformation makes us more sensitive to the inequalities and injustices that persist in the world and compels us to fight poverty, discrimination, and social exclusion. By fostering empathy and solidarity, we can promote equity and social inclusion, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live a full and dignified life, as stated in Principle III of the Charter: "Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful."

**Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace:** Inner transformation invites us to cultivate inner peace and promote nonviolence in all our relationships. By developing the ability to listen, engage in dialogue, and resolve conflicts peacefully, we can contribute to building more just, peaceful, and democratic societies, in accordance with Principle IV of the Charter: "Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations."



## AN EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME: PLANTING THE SEEDS OF TRANSFORMATION

To put this transformative approach into practice, we designed an experimental and experiential master's degree programme at the University of the Basque Country (UPV/EHU). This programme is inspired by a range of theories and pedagogical frameworks that promote deep learning, critical reflection, and transformative action, including Otto Scharmer's Theory U, Sipos et al.'s [2008] transformative learning for sustainability, Peter Senge's systems thinking, and the Earth Charter.

The programme is based on three interrelated experiences aimed at fostering students' inner transformation:

- **Reflective Seminars:** These seminars provide a safe and stimulating space for the presentation and discussion of concepts, paradigms, and tools that encourage deep reflection on the assumptions and beliefs underlying our thinking and behavior. Through open dialogue, critical inquiry, and the exploration of diverse perspectives, students are invited to question their worldviews and develop greater awareness of the global challenges we face.
- **Transdisciplinary Action Labs:** These labs offer students the opportunity to work in transdisciplinary teams to address complex challenges posed by civil society organizations, public

institutions, and private sector partners. By confronting real-world problems and collaborating with diverse stakeholders, students develop leadership, social innovation, and conflict resolution skills while contributing to community well-being.

- **Transformative Personal Development Plan:** This plan provides students with a set of activities and tools designed to enhance self-awareness, self-management, and the development of key socio-emotional skills for inner transformation. Through mindfulness practices, personal reflection exercises, and group dynamics, students learn to cultivate empathy, compassion, resilience, and the ability to make ethical and responsible decisions.

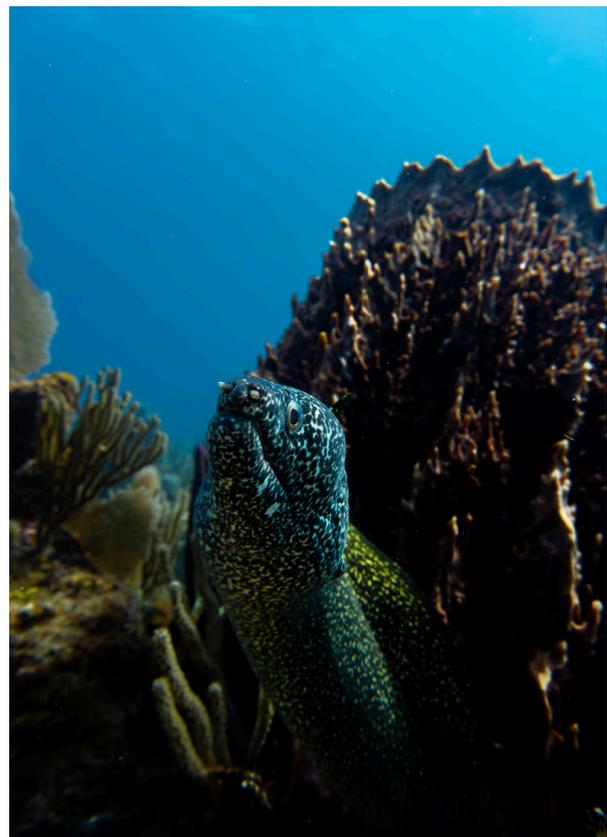


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## THE EARTH CHARTER AS AN ETHICAL GUIDE AND MORAL COMPASS

In this educational project, the Earth Charter serves as an ethical guide and moral compass that directs us toward a sustainable future. Its principles and values remind us of the importance of respecting and caring for the community of life, of promoting ecological integrity, social and economic justice, and of building democratic, peaceful, and nonviolent societies.

By aligning our educational efforts with the Earth Charter, we can inspire our students to become committed leaders in the construction of a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world—a world where all people can live full, dignified lives in harmony with nature.

## RESULTS AND LEARNING: TESTIMONIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Herewith, we would like to share some preliminary results from this master's programme. The early outcomes are promising and suggest that integrating inner transformation with the principles of the Earth Charter can have a significant impact on students' personal and professional development, ultimately contributing to systemic outcomes that support the sustainability of life. Students have reported increases in self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, and collaboration skills. They also demonstrate a stronger commitment to sustainability and a greater willingness to take action for the planet.

In particular, students have highlighted the importance of:

- **Cultivating Human Connection:** Being surrounded by a strong team of educators who helped them navigate doubts and uncertainties, and created spaces of friendship, love, and respect, students emphasized the importance of trust in rediscovering and expressing their creativity. They expressed that working with peers who share their values and passion for sustainability provided vital support in overcoming challenges and maintaining motivation throughout the programme.
- **Exploring New Perspectives:** Stepping into unfamiliar spaces allowed them to relate to the world from new viewpoints and to question their assumptions and beliefs. Students participated in visits to local organizations and met with social leaders, which expanded their worldview and helped them understand the complexity of sustainability challenges. These experiences encouraged greater empathy toward people and places most vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation.
- **Managing Emotions and Overcoming Obstacles:** Preliminary results highlight the importance of recognizing and managing emotions to drive projects forward and overcome hurdles. Students learned to identify and regulate their emotions and to apply emotional intelligence to build stronger relationships and resolve conflicts peacefully. They also developed the

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resilience and perseverance needed to face the inevitable challenges involved in sustainability work.

- **Connecting with a Greater Purpose:** One of the programme's goals is to support students in discovering their life purpose and aligning their actions with their deepest values. Students reflected on their values, passions, and talents, and identified how they could use them to contribute to a more sustainable future. By connecting with a greater purpose, they found the motivation and energy to persist in their journeys towards sustainability.
- **Developing a Systemic Vision:** Tackling complex challenges presented by our community enabled students to understand the interconnection between social, economic, and environmental systems. They noted that they learned to analyze sustainability issues from a systemic perspective, recognizing the interdependence of different systems and the importance of addressing problems in a holistic manner. They discovered that solutions to sustainability challenges are not found in isolated actions, but in the transformation of the systems that generate them.

These testimonials illustrate the transformative power of sustainability education when it is integrated with inner transformation and guided by the principles of the Earth Charter. By cultivating human connection, exploring new perspectives, managing emotions, connecting with a greater purpose, and

developing a systemic vision, students become change agents capable of building a more just, sustainable, and peaceful future.

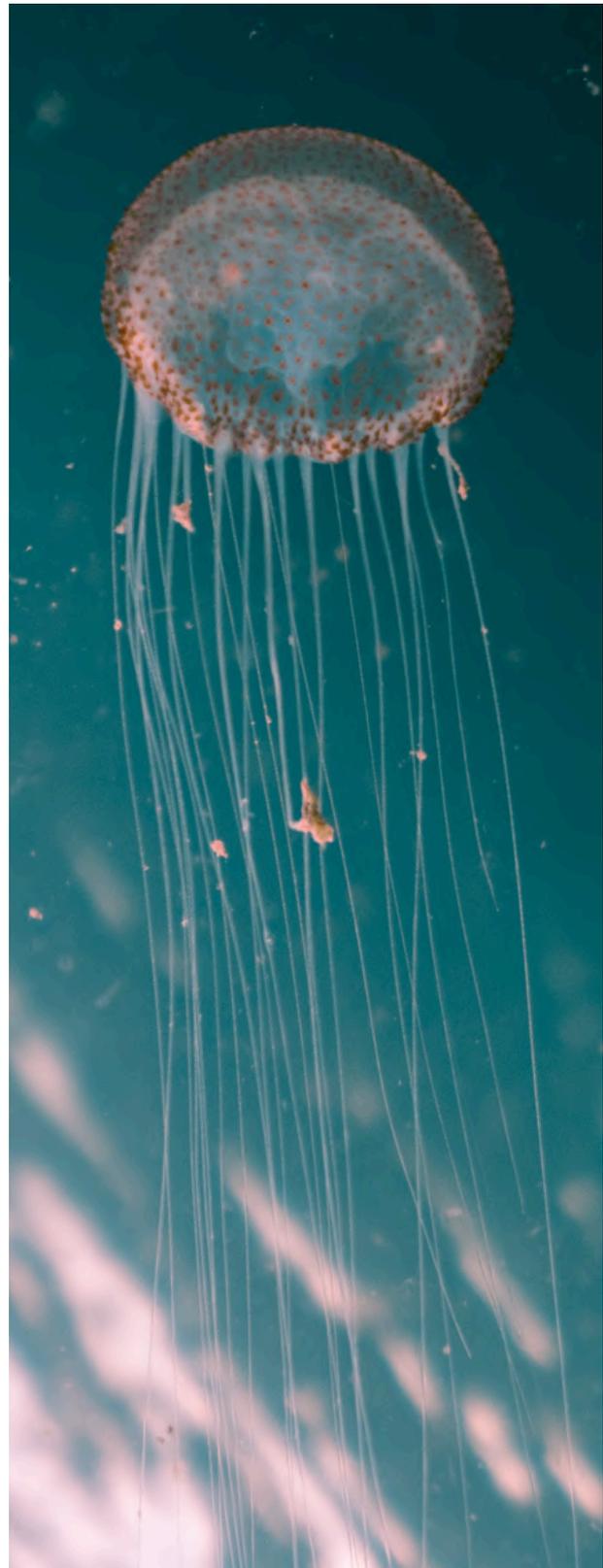


Photo Credit: Pelagos



## CONCLUSIONS

My experience as an educator for sustainable development has shown me that education for sustainability must go beyond the transmission of knowledge and skills. While such knowledge is essential for developing critical thinking, I believe it is equally important to cultivate the inner capacities that enable students to become transformative leaders, to navigate complexity, embrace collaboration, and drive systemic change.

By integrating the principles of the Earth Charter into our teaching practices, we can empower students to become ethical, compassionate, and committed citizens dedicated to building a more just and sustainable world. This requires a shift in mindset, a willingness to embrace experimentation, and a deep commitment to fostering a culture of learning and collaboration.

As we move forward, it is essential to continue exploring innovative pedagogical approaches that promote transformative learning and empower students to become agents of change. We must also work to create a more supportive and empowering environment for sustainability education, both within our institutions and in the broader community.

Ultimately, the success of our efforts will depend on our ability to inspire a deep sense of connection, responsibility, and agency in our students. By fostering a culture of learning, collaboration, and ethical action, we can empower them to become the leaders we need to create a more just and sustainable future for all.



Photo Credit: Pelagos

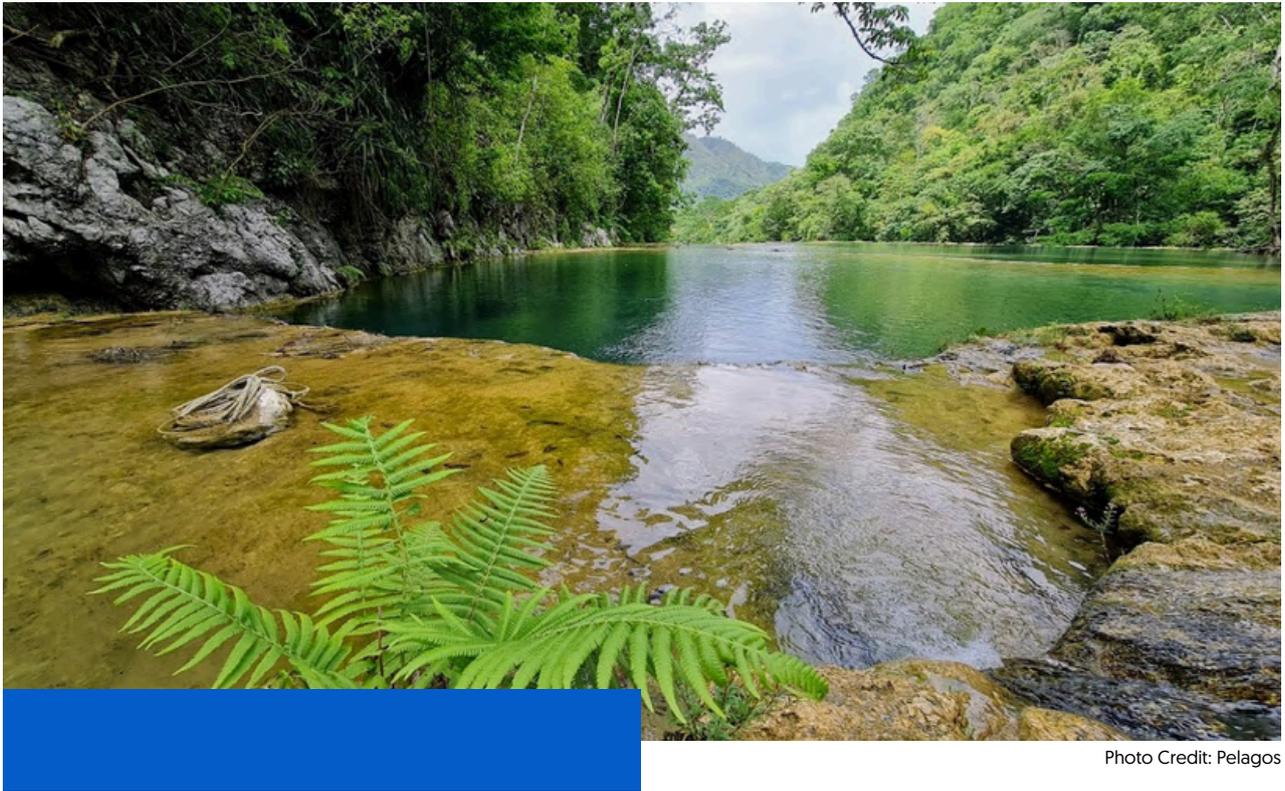


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## Earth Charter and the Cantic of the Creatures: Seeds for Planetary Communion



Erik Marín Carballo

Erick Marín Carballo, Costa Rican Conventual Franciscan Friar, is facilitator of Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) in Central America. He travels between communities across cultures. Son of the Earth and brother of all creatures.



I thought I would have time to write a few lines in these days. But I ended up spending my hours with a family from the Lenca people, who, when planting seeds, connect with the land—both their own and others’—nourish ancestral hopes, and embrace uncertainties that are not optional. Undoubtedly, this is the humus that nourishes my words, the force that moves our wounded world, and perhaps the reason that an anniversary inspires a renewed commitment to the cries of the Earth and its peoples.

And speaking of anniversaries, which go beyond mere counting of years, the Earth Charter and the Canticale of the Creatures by Saint Francis of Assisi come to mind. The first turns 25 years old. The second, 800. But perhaps we are facing principle-seeds that escape the prison of records. They are free from time. They belong to ancient and new wisdoms, always present in the heart of the world and in its noblest aspirations.

Let us consider the set of seeds gathered in the Earth Charter [Earth Charter Commission, 2000]. They were born from attentive and open listening, dialogue with peoples and cultures, analyzing global contexts and dynamics. They also brought together hands, ideas, and hearts from many people and regions. They felt the heartbeat of the Earth—weak and threatened. And filled with a hope that is not naïve, they gave voice to words.

I don't believe the gathering process was easy. Nor do I think of it as a nostalgic and distant past. We are witnessing ongoing, germinal, and ever-living dynamics. Today, they are read through the voices of the

peoples, the challenges that continue to shape history, and the urgent need to move forward in equity, socio-environmental justice, and communion with all creation. The seed is called to stop being just a seed

Several centuries earlier, Saint Francis of Assisi, the universal brother who transcends religions and times, gave us the Canticale of the Creatures. The seeds of this poem sing to the Most High for the gift of all creatures: Brother Sun, Sister Moon, and the stars. They sing for Brother Wind and all weather, through which the good God gives sustenance to His creatures; for Sister Water, humble and beautiful; for Brother Fire, who with his joy and strength lights up the night and the darkness; for our Sister Mother Earth, who governs and sustains life with her diversity of fruits, flowers, and herbs. Her seeds also sing for people: those who forgive out of love, the sick, and the afflicted of the world. At the



Photo Credit: Erik Marin



end of the poem, his praise even celebrates Sister Death, because mystery and pain, when embraced with passion, open the way to transformation [St. Francis of Assisi, 1225].

In 1225, the year the Cantic of the Creatures was composed, Saint Francis of Assisi was ill and marked by crisis. The world that saw him born was also going through darkness. And from that darkness, he discovered beauty, reasons for praise, and for building a cosmic fraternity-sorority in which oppressive power gives way to creaturely communion that makes us family. We are siblings of the sun and stars!

From the perspective of “brother” and “sister,” there are no masters or overlords who enslave the weak. There is no room for violence that kills, nor competition that divides. Nor for accumulation that steals, separates people, and destroys planetary balances. The darkness and crisis—of yesterday and today—do not have the final word: it is time to nurture the sprouts of a reconciled world, to care for life under threat, and to make visible that we are interconnected by sacred bonds. It is time for the warmth of home!

The Earth Charter (Earth Charter Commission, 2000), in its own language, affirms this in its preamble:

“The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.” [p. 5]

To remember our place in the world is to affirm our responsibility: to light the night of our history with brother fire, capable of kindling dormant hopes and global commitments for a world at peace.

For [Francis of Assisi](#) [1225], the Earth is mother while still being sister. She is a friend of diversity, and we are not her masters: she is the one who governs us and gives us sustenance. There is no room for exploitative domination or destructive superiority. It is time for collaboration among peoples, respect for natural cycles, and loving embrace of the one who nourishes and governs us. It is time to recover wonder at the world’s beauty, the simplicity of life, and the deep spirituality that unites us in the challenge of communion and care for all creatures. [par. 8]

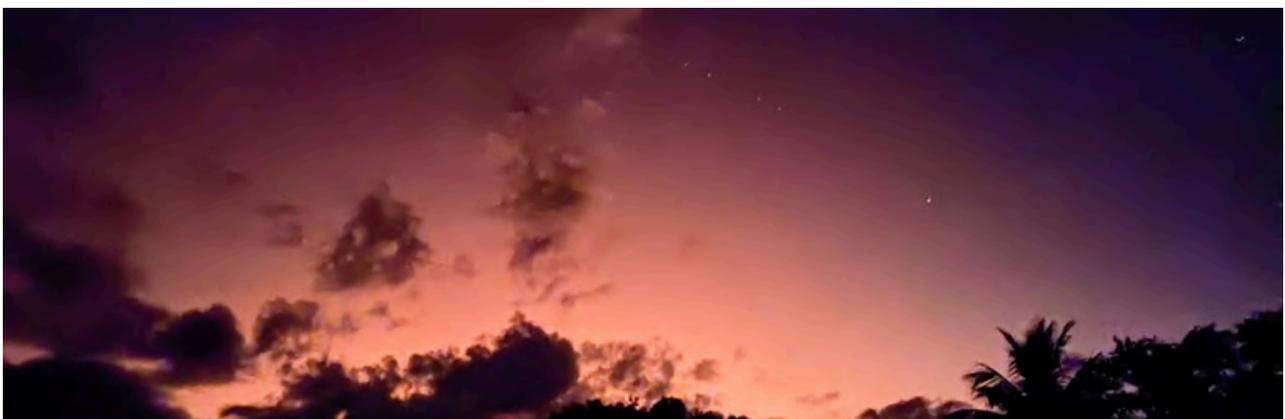


Photo Credit: Erik Marin

**“It is time to nurture the  
sprouts of a reconciled world,  
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and to make visible that we  
are interconnected by sacred  
bonds.”**

Erik Marīn



The Earth Charter [Earth Charter Commission, 2000] reminds us of some conditions for the path of return and for future efforts, always leaving space for peoples to embrace these principles through their own ways and values:

“This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must develop and apply the vision of sustainable living at the local, national, regional, and global levels. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage, and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision.” [p. 24]

Today, we continue to welcome the seed-principles of new horizons. We are Earth in celebration, one and many. Through varied languages, we are bound together by planetary challenges. The Earth Charter and the Canticule of the Creatures are part of the cosmic dance of care and compassion that makes us siblings. With our strong voices, through joint actions and conscious participation, we continue to rewrite yesterday’s commitment, carrying in our hearts the generations of tomorrow. We are living lyrics of this great planetary hymn!

Alongside the Lenca people, and with all cultures, organizations, and nations, we continue planting efforts for a reconciled world—making hope a force for change and renewing the promise to be humus, nourished by Brother Sun, the gentle breeze, and the beauty of the waters. The sprouts are already here: 800 years ago, 25 years ago, and today.



Photo Credit: Erik Marin



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Photo Credit: Pelagos

# Navigating Biodiversity and Business in Latin America: Key Barriers and Drivers



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Biodiversity loss has reached alarming levels, becoming one of the most pressing environmental risks of our time [WEF, 2024]. As awareness of this crisis grows, pressure is increasing on companies to act, particularly given their significant impacts on and dependencies upon natural ecosystems [Bishop et al., 2008]. Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR] and sustainability frameworks have served as key tools to drive corporate engagement with biodiversity [Moon, 2014]. Yet despite Latin America's unparalleled natural wealth and leadership in biodiversity risk reporting [KPMG, 2022], corporate action on this front remains relatively emergent across the region. Which is why during my master's studies at the University of Leeds, I focused my dissertation on Latin America, a region with deep personal significance, and one I believe holds immense potential to reframe business narratives. Narratives that not only address socio-environmental realities but also embrace the region's ecological richness and vulnerability to biodiversity loss and climate change.

The research aimed to better understand the business engagement in incorporating biodiversity into corporate strategies in Latin America. To achieve that, the study employed a qualitative approach, leveraging the triangulation method and semi-structured interviews to gather comprehensive insights and perspectives from three key actors:

- Implementers: businesses and corporations directly engaged in incorporating and deploying biodiversity strategies.

- Enablers: entities, associations, and initiatives providing frameworks, advocacy, guidelines, or resources to integrate the biodiversity agenda into the corporate landscape.
- Developers: Entities executing biodiversity-related projects on the ground and collaborating with implementers, in executing corporate strategies towards biodiversity.

This article presents key insights and reflections from that research process, to spark a deeper conversation about what it truly takes to drive meaningful change from within the business world.



Photo Credit: Pelagos



This research aimed to identify the key features shaping the integration of biodiversity into businesses’ sustainability strategies, as well as to understand the barriers and drivers’ companies face when adopting biodiversity-related strategies in Latin America. Based on the interview analysis and supported by an iterative and flexible approach, six key features were identified and examined in the context of existing academic research. These features include international demands, regulations, and legal frameworks, multistakeholder engagement, integration of sustainability into the business core, accountability and measurement, and sustainability culture and advocacy.

To gain a clearer and broader understanding of the phenomenon, each feature was further classified as either a barrier or a driver influencing business responses. A summary of these classifications is presented below:

	Features	Barriers	Drivers
External	International demands		* Biodiversity global trends * Sector-specific reputation * International certifications and public commitments
	Regulations and legal frameworks	* Lack of biodiversity regulations	
	Multistakeholder engagement		* Sector-wide collaboration * External partnerships
Internal	Integration of sustainability into the business core	* Organization type * Philanthropy-oriented vision	* Robust sustainability strategy
	Accountability and measurement	* Narrow compliance-oriented vision * Unclear financial business case * Extended-term projects	
	Sustainability culture and advocacy	* Leadership endorsement * Limited understanding of biodiversity-business Interconnection	* Sustainability agency * Interdepartmental collaboration

Source: The summary was developed by the author based on interview findings

### Key drivers to biodiversity integration into corporate strategies

To gain a clearer and broader understanding of the phenomenon, each feature was further classified as either a barrier or a driver influencing business responses. A summary of these classifications is presented below:

#### Internal Drivers

The integration of biodiversity considerations into corporate sustainability strategies across Latin America is fundamentally driven by three interconnected internal organizational factors. Companies with a robust sustainability strategy have a foundational framework that enables them to incorporate emerging biodiversity topics into their existing operational sustainability efforts. This strategic foundation is amplified by a strong sustainability agency, where dedicated sustainability professionals and teams act as catalysts, spreading environmental consciousness throughout organizational buy-in while building internal capacities and fostering employee engagement. Finally, interdepartmental collaboration emerges as the critical element that drives biodiversity



integration at an operational level. A culture of collaboration between departments contributes to overcoming challenges in implementing biodiversity action plans, such as accurate measurement, resistance to change, and managing multiple stakeholders.

“Our corporate plan allows us to develop a sustainability strategy and a set of policies. Currently, we are working on integrating a nature strategy that directly aligns with our higher purpose” [Implementer]

### External drivers

Latin American businesses are increasingly compelled to integrate biodiversity into their sustainability strategies due to a convergence of powerful external drivers that are influencing the corporate landscape. The momentum generated by global biodiversity trends, particularly following landmark agreements like the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and heightened attention from COP16 in Colombia, has elevated biodiversity to a strategic imperative that companies can no longer ignore. Simultaneously, sector-specific reputational pressures are intensifying, especially for nature-dependent industries such as palm oil, mining, and forestry, where companies face pressures from consumers and investors who demand tangible environmental action. The proliferation of international certifications, alongside high-profile public commitments such as the 1 trillion trees pledge, creates standardized frameworks that both guide and pressure companies toward biodiversity integration.

Furthermore, sector-wide collaboration through industry associations and external partnerships with academia, government agencies, and NGOs are providing both the knowledge and stakeholder legitimacy necessary for credible biodiversity strategies.

“Reputation and visibility are key, as well as compliance with standards and various accreditations” [Enabler]

### Key Barriers to biodiversity integration into corporate strategies

#### External barriers

Latin American businesses face significant external barriers that impede the integration of biodiversity into their sustainability strategies, with the most prominent being the lack of comprehensive biodiversity regulations. The regulatory gap has impacted corporate behaviour, as businesses tend to concentrate their sustainability efforts on meeting existing environmental obligations rather than proactively addressing biodiversity loss, often redirecting their attention toward more regulated areas like carbon emissions, where compliance frameworks are established. This regulatory gap creates uncertainty about whether businesses will take meaningful action without mandatory guidelines.

“Our focus has been on regulation, particularly because our reference point is the European Union and the regulations in those countries. This focus, along with local regulations, has primarily led us to concentrate on climate change” [Implementer]



**“There is no  
universal recipe  
for  
transformation”**

Laura M. Rodríguez Uribe



## Internal barriers

Several internal barriers hinder the effective integration of biodiversity into corporate sustainability strategies across Latin America. First, **organizational type** plays a significant role, as large corporations tend to have structured CSR frameworks and strategic motivations, while SMEs, despite representing 99.5% of the region's businesses [OECD, 2024], often lack the capacity and targeted support to implement biodiversity initiatives. Additionally, some companies adopt a **philanthropy-oriented vision**, limiting biodiversity actions to isolated, symbolic efforts disconnected from core operations. A **narrow, compliance-driven mindset** further restricts engagement, as companies focus on meeting regulatory requirements without embedding biodiversity into strategic planning. Compounding these challenges is the **unclear financial business case**, where quantifying the economic benefits and returns of implementing biodiversity strategies remains a challenge. In addition, **long-term project timelines** also hinder action, as biodiversity outcomes often require years to materialize, conflicting with the short-termism prevalent in business ecosystems. Finally, a **lack of leadership endorsement and limited understanding of biodiversity-business interconnections** weakens institutional commitment and strategic prioritization.

"In Latin America, we are not very clear on how to align a corporate sustainability strategy, concrete actions on biodiversity, and a long-term sustainability financial plan" [Developer]

## Reflections and conclusion

Becoming a sustainability professional is not a linear journey. On the contrary, I see it as an ongoing process of questioning and challenging the traditional ways in which businesses operate. It's about learning to view systems through a critical lens and finding the right tools and resources to enable real transformation.

Along the way, I've come to realize how easy it is to judge organizations based on their progress toward sustainability. The journey is rarely straightforward; it's often filled with contradictions, moments of frustration, and doubts about whether companies are truly committed to adjusting their practices for a more sustainable future. The truth is the transformation we're calling for is not simple. Like building a career in sustainability it demands more than just passion. It requires a blend of specialized and multidisciplinary expertise, an ethical willingness, and a strategic mindset that can bridge diverse perspectives and bring the right actors to the table to drive meaningful, lasting progress.

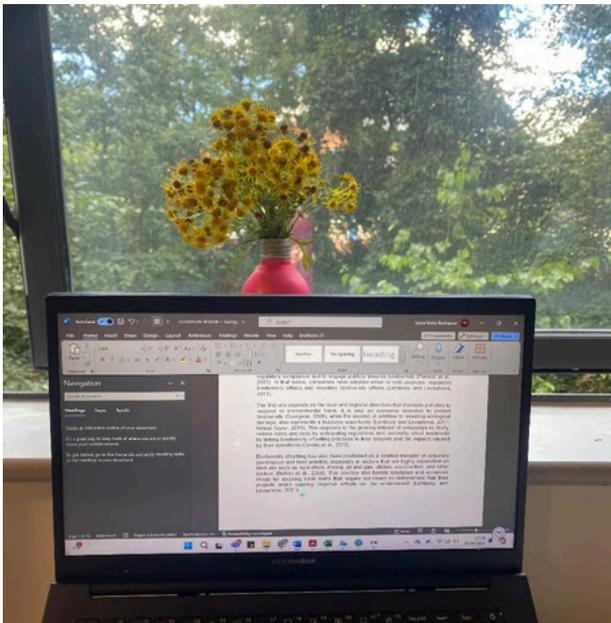
Bearing this in mind, and reflecting on the principles of the Earth Charter, it becomes clear that an ethical compass is more imperative than ever. Companies are made up of people, and it is people who can foster internal advocacy for sustainability. This means having the courage to lead difficult conversations, raise awareness, and stand up for what they deeply believe in, even when it's uncomfortable. Each organization operates within a unique context and at varying levels of maturity;



there is no universal recipe for transformation. At times, sustainability efforts may feel isolated or fragmented. And yet, I know many professionals who are genuinely driven by purpose, trying, and working hard despite the alarming and overwhelming context we live in. It is precisely this collective will, grounded in ethics and courage, that will enable companies to move forward and embrace a holistic approach, one in which business, nature, and people can thrive together.

### Acknowledgement

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Dissertation summer view 2024, this was my space for long hours of reading and studying. A lifetime adventure as an international student in the UK during my MSc in Sustainability and Business.

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## About the Earth Charter

Crafted by visionaries over twenty years ago, the Earth Charter is a document with sixteen principles, organized under four pillars, that seek to turn conscience into action. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the whole human family, the greater community of life, and future generations. It is a vision of hope and a call to action.

## About the Earth Charter International Center for Education

The ECI Education Center, located on the campus of the UN Mandated University for Peace in San José, Costa Rica, offers a variety of online and on-site education programmes that highlight the importance of incorporating sustainability values and principles into decision-making and education. It provides an opportunity for participants to expand their understanding of sustainability and see the possibilities for turning it into action. Since 2012, the Earth Charter Education Center coordinates the [UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development with the Earth Charter.](#)