

Introduction

Earth Charter in Mexico
Multilingual and powerful

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In a country like Mexico, biologically megadiverse and multicultural, it is very important and meaningful for the Earth Charter to resonate in its languages. Today, there are translations into languages from six linguistic families, in some cases into variants of the same language, as shown in the map reproduced here. It is a path that has only just begun, but it is undoubtedly a sign of the intention for this very important document to enter into direct dialogue with communities that possess ancestral knowledge, not only of their territory but also of ways of coexistence and ways of seeing the world that allow us to inhabit our Earth in harmony.

It is not easy to translate a 21st-century document into languages that have been excluded from national public life for so many years. The vocabulary that majority languages have developed over the last centuries to name many elements of our societies must give way to neologisms that require not only knowledge of both worlds and both languages but also experience and skill in translation that are acquired through practice and specific training for this task.

On the other hand, Indigenous languages have a rich vocabulary to describe their environment and worldview, which in many cases surpasses in its subtlety the less refined vocabulary we use in the languages that dominate our planet in the 21st century. Translation, which is always also a process of inculturation, is enriched by this.

It should also be mentioned that the Spanish alphabet is, in many cases, insufficient to write Mesoamerican languages. For example, the five vowels of Spanish contrast with at least nine in Otomí, depending on its variants. Something similar occurs with consonants. Since the arrival of the conquest and with it alphabetic writing, scribes have found different solutions to this problem, and today, little by little, agreements are being reached for a more uniform writing system, easier for all speakers to use. It is a long process that will require time.

Undoubtedly, for all these reasons, most of the Earth Charter translations we have compiled come from the favorable environment of those who most frequently write in

the languages of Mexico: Indigenous teachers and the country's intercultural universities.

As an international reference document that takes root in regions through their words, these translations also contribute to the creation of a specific vocabulary on issues of sustainability and social justice that can be disseminated and reused in other writings on this subject. It would be highly desirable for universities to develop specialized vocabularies for the states in which they are located, serving as a reference for the in-depth conversations that will undoubtedly increasingly take place among young intellectuals and professionals who will build the future in their homelands, contributing to our shared future from their wise ancestral cultures.

In this book, we have used the classification of the country's linguistic families provided by the *Catalogue of National Indigenous Languages*, prepared by the National Institute of Indigenous Languages and published in the Official Gazette of the Federation in 2008ⁱ. We have also used the self-denominations of the languages as they appear in this Catalogue, whenever we have known with precision the variant of the translator. When this has not been the case, we have maintained the usual name of the language in Spanish.

Most of the translations cover the Earth Charter in its entirety. Some, such as those in Chontal and Purépecha, are a first approach to the 16 principles that make up the document. The Earth Charter for children was translated into Totonac.

In summary, this is a work in progress. We present it with the conviction that, in the encounter with the Earth Charter, the ancestral word is powerful, in the present and for the future.

ⁱ Official Gazette of the Federation (Volume DCLII, Number 9), Mexico City, January 14, 2008.