

The Earth Charter in the Languages of Mexico: Global Ethics, Cultural Diversity and Local Commitment

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Introduction

The Earth Charter today constitutes a global ethical framework that seeks to guide humanity toward a just, sustainable, and peaceful future (Earth Charter, 2000). Since its official launch, it has become a reference for governments, educational institutions, social organizations, businesses and industry, and communities around the world. However, its true value lies in its capacity to engage in dialogue with local realities, with cultures and worldviews that, from their territories, have also woven proposals for care and respect for all life.

In this sense, the translation of the Earth Charter into the Indigenous languages of Mexico represents an act of profound cultural and ethical recognition. Mexico is one of the countries with the greatest linguistic diversity in the world: the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) has recorded 68 linguistic groupings and 364 variants (INALI, 2008). In addition, it is also one of the biologically megadiverse countries, and this coincidence is not accidental: there are few territories on the planet where cultural richness and natural richness are so closely intertwined, forming what is known as biocultural megadiversity. In Mexico, the plurality of languages is directly linked to the diversity of ecosystems and territories, since each language contains not only words, but also a particular way of understanding the world, relating to nature, and building community.

In different parts of the world, the Earth Charter has been translated into dozens of languages, with the aim of ensuring that its message reaches peoples directly in the richness of their own language. This effort not only broadens its dissemination, but also deepens its meaning, as the words resonate in the heart and consciousness of each culture. Translating the Earth Charter is to plant its principles in the cultural humus of each people, where ethics intertwines with their

own worldviews to inspire life changes and open paths toward justice, resilience, sustainability, and peace. In this way, linguistic diversity becomes an essential ally in transforming consciousness and promoting lifestyles that strengthen our common home.

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity of Mexico

Mexico is a cultural mosaic where multiple worldviews coexist. Authors such as Bonfil Batalla (1987) have highlighted that the “Mesoamerican civilization” remains alive in Indigenous peoples, who sustain practices, knowledge, and values that contrast with Western modernity. In this context, Indigenous languages are vehicles of historical memory, but also living instruments for rethinking sustainability.

UNESCO has emphasized the importance of linguistic diversity as a heritage of humanity, linking its preservation to the right of peoples to exist and to determine their ways of life (UNESCO, 2003). Hence, this editorial effort seeks to build bridges between the global and the local, between the universal ethics of the Earth Charter and the richness of Indigenous languages.

In addition, the international organization has pointed out that each language represents an intangible heritage of humanity and an irreplaceable way of understanding the world, so that its loss also implies the disappearance of a worldview and of unique knowledge about nature and life (UNESCO, 2019). In this sense, the international Earth Charter movement joins this effort of conservation and revitalization by offering a global ethical framework that is nourished and comes to life in the diversity of linguistic expressions. The translation of the Earth Charter into Mexican languages not only strengthens the cultural vitality of these peoples, but also contributes to the global task of preserving linguistic plurality as a basis for building sustainable and peaceful societies.

In Mexico, the Earth Charter has been translated into a significant number of languages that represent different linguistic families, reflecting the richness and

cultural diversity of the country. Among them are the Mayan languages such as ch'ol, chontal, maya, tzeltal, tzotzil, and zoque; from the Oto-Manguean family, Otomí/hñahñu from the Mezquital Valley and Otomí/ñuhu from the Eastern Sierra; from the Tarascan family, Purépecha; from the Totonacan family, Tepehua/lhima'alh'ama and Totonac/tutunaku; and from the Uto-Aztecan family, Náhuatl from the Huasteca, Náhuatl from Acaxochitlán/Northern Sierra of Puebla, and Yaqui.

This plurality of translations constitutes a living testimony of how the universal principles of the Earth Charter can be embodied in specific cultural contexts, engaging in dialogue with worldviews that conceive nature as mother, teacher, and source of life. Thus, each version not only preserves and revitalizes languages, but also reaffirms the relevance of the Earth Charter as an intercultural tool capable of inspiring just, resilient, sustainable, and peaceful lifestyles.

Translation as an Ethical and Political Act

Translating does not only mean transferring words from one language to another. As Walter Mignolo (2003) argues, every translation involves an exercise of power and intercultural dialogue. In the case of the Earth Charter, translation into Indigenous languages is also a political act: it recognizes the existence of Indigenous peoples as historical subjects, bearers of rights and knowledge.

In many cases, terms that in Spanish may seem abstract find in Indigenous languages an expression charged with spirituality and a relationship with nature. For example, the concept of “Earth” in Purépecha—*juchari eratsikua*—refers not only to the soil, but to the mother who nourishes and gives life (Álvarez, 2010). This type of reinterpretation enriches the message of the Earth Charter and brings it closer to peoples within their own worldview.

In this way, translation becomes an act of cultural justice that allows communities not only to receive a text, but to appropriate it, reinterpret it, and use it as a tool for defense and for building the future.

From the perspective of Leonardo Boff (2002), the ethics of care and responsibility toward life constitute an indispensable foundation for any project of humanity. In this sense, the translation of the Earth Charter into Indigenous languages is not only a cultural or linguistic act, but a deeply ethical gesture: it recognizes the dignity of Indigenous peoples, their right to understand and recreate the message within the horizon of their own worldview, while at the same time strengthening the universal principle of the interdependence of all life. Translating from an ethics of care implies planting in each language an invitation to transform consciousness and to adopt lifestyles oriented toward respect, care, justice, sustainability, inclusion, and above all, peace.

Indigenous Languages and Visions of Sustainability

The Indigenous peoples of Mexico possess millenary traditions of harmonious relationships with nature. Enrique Leff (2010) has pointed out that the contemporary environmental crisis is linked to the imposition of a civilizational model that breaks with the environmental rationality of Indigenous peoples. In response, recovering their languages and worldviews also implies recovering sustainable ways of life that are essential for addressing current challenges.

In the Náhuatl worldview, for example, the concept of *tlaltikpak* expresses the totality of the Earth as a space of interdependence among all beings. In the Mayan world, the word *lekil kuxlejal* means “good and dignified life,” a notion that coincides with the Earth Charter principle of “living with respect and care for the community of life” (Earth Charter, 2000). The preamble, toward its end, expresses it even better: “The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, with gratitude for the gift of life, and with humility regarding the place human beings occupy in nature.” These convergences reveal that sustainability is not a new concept, but an ancestral wisdom that dialogues with global urgencies.

Impact and Projection of the Work

This book becomes an educational, cultural, and political tool of great scope. In the school and higher education context, it can be used to promote reflection on environmental ethics from an intercultural perspective. In communities, it can strengthen identity pride and commitment to the defense of territory.

Furthermore, by placing Indigenous languages at the center of the dialogue on sustainability, the work sends a clear message: there is no sustainable future without the inclusion of Indigenous peoples. As Arturo Escobar (2016) affirms, the construction of alternative futures depends on recognizing the multiple ontologies and epistemologies that exist in the world. In this sense, the Earth Charter, by emphasizing social justice, finds a profound echo in Indigenous community practices, where lifelong commitment to the community is cultivated. As thinkers of communality point out, Indigenous life is sustained by four pillars: territory, consensus in assembly, collective work, and community service (Díaz, 2007; Martínez Luna, 2010). In many Indigenous cultures, service is not understood as an individual option, but as a collective responsibility: people serve in what the assembly requests, contributing to the common good. Likewise, the higher value of consensus is taught: decisions are not usually made by voting, but through prolonged dialogue until reaching an agreement that expresses the unified voice of the community. These principles, embodied in the daily life of Indigenous peoples, enrich and deepen the ethical meaning of the Earth Charter, reminding us that sustainability cannot be achieved without justice, solidarity, and genuine participation.

At the international level, the Earth Charter has inspired communities, educational institutions, businesses, local governments, and citizen networks in more than 100 countries, generating processes of training, intercultural dialogue, and collective action for sustainability (Corcoran, Vilela & Roerink, 2005). The present work is part of this global movement, contributing from the Indigenous languages of Mexico a living testimony of how universal ethical principles can take root in diverse cultural contexts. In this way, the project not only has national impact, but

also enriches the global horizon by showing that translation, when done with respect and sensitivity, becomes a seed of shared hope for humanity.

Conclusion

The translation of the Earth Charter into the languages of Mexico is not only an editorial initiative, but a gesture of respect, justice, and hope. By expressing the principles of global ethics in these languages, dialogue between forms of knowledge is strengthened, and it is recognized that Indigenous peoples are not a vestige of the past, but fundamental actors for the present and the future of Mexico and humanity.

Thus, the book not only brings together translations, but also symbolizes the convergence of the universal and the local, the ancestral and the contemporary. It is an invitation to build sustainability together from diversity, recognizing that the plurality of languages and cultures is an indispensable richness for achieving a full, just, and peaceful existence.

The translation of the Earth Charter into the Indigenous languages of Mexico constitutes one of the most significant contributions of the Mexican Earth Charter Network both to the country and to the international movement. This effort not only honors the cultural and linguistic richness of Mexico, but also strengthens the global reach of the Earth Charter by showing how its universal principles and values come to life in diverse local contexts. In doing so, the Mexican Network contributes a unique dimension to intercultural dialogue, building bridges between planetary ethics and the original worldviews that have safeguarded, for centuries, practices of respect and care for life. In this way, it contributes to consolidating an international movement that not only proclaims principles, but embodies them in multiple languages and cultures, inspiring lifestyles in Mexico and the world.

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