

Speaking from the Heart: Voices and Reflections from the Earth Charter +25 Event, The Netherlands



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This publication offers highlights from the Earth Charter +25 event, "Planetary Consciousness, Ethics of Care and Intergenerational Justice," held from 1–3 July 2025 in The Netherlands.

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Introduction

The year 2025 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the historic launch of the Earth Charter, first presented in June 2000 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, The Netherlands. That milestone was the result of many years of consultation, dialogue, and drafting to identify the key ideas, concepts, language, and structure that would ultimately shape the Earth Charter.

In July 2025, we came together once again to take stock of this journey, share experiences, reconnect, and strengthen the sense of community that has embraced the worldview articulated in the Earth Charter. This gathering also nurtured our collective capacity to collaborate and reaffirmed our determination to continue moving forward. Over the first quarter of this century, the Earth Charter has been translated into more than 74 languages and has inspired countless projects, dialogues, books, publications, and research initiatives. Yet, much more remains to be done.

This three-day anniversary event, titled “Planetary Consciousness, Ethics of Care, and Intergenerational Justice,” brought together 340 participants from 35 countries, 92 speakers, and seven musical performances. The event engaged Earth Charter Young Leaders,

educators, affiliated and partner organizations, members of the ECI Council, and many new friends. Intergenerational justice and collaboration permeated the entire gathering, which was organized in partnership with the Earth Charter Netherlands Committee and Earth Charter International, and generously supported by numerous sponsors.

It is impossible for this publication to fully capture the richness of the three-day conference and the many presentations shared. However, we present here a glimpse of what was the event with a collection of seven of those contributions shared at this event, along with one that was originally planned, but could not be presented, to offer a gist into this special gathering:

Severn Cullis-Suzuki talked about the importance of friendship and collective vision to move ahead in transformative movements, as well as acknowledging our grief over the losses of this time.

Akpezi Ogbuigwe highlighted the idea of community—Earth Community—and collaboration, moving beyond “us versus them,” indicating that the EC is a call to community as we navigate the challenges of our time.



Elizabeth Wathuti emphasized how essential it is to undertake community action through intergenerational collaboration and to see climate justice as a moral imperative. Amanda Bennett stressed the importance of fostering planetary ethics through youth education.

Heather Eaton spoke about the power of hope, ethics, and spirituality, and invited all to consider beauty as an essential element for transformation.

Joy Philip talked about the importance of EC as a movement and made an analogy, describing the Earth Charter as a “green fire” fueled by eco-consciousness and spirituality that transforms consciousness into action.

Jacobus Bracker highlighted the importance of culture and how cultures are built or nurtured by the stories we tell.

Peter Blaze Corcoran reflected on the educational power of the Earth Charter as a vision of hope and a guide to action that nurtures ecological and ethical literacy.

This publication highlights five special recognitions presented on this occasion to individuals who have contributed to the Earth Charter Movement in an outstanding manner. It also features the art and musical performances that were part of this special event.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those who made this memorable occasion possible.

We trust this publication will serve as a source of reflection, inspiration, and aspiration.

Mirian Vilela
Executive Director
Earth Charter International



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Friendship, Vision and Grief in Transformative Movements



Severn Cullis-Suzuki

Severn has championed intergenerational and environmental justice her entire life. At 12, she co-founded the Environmental Children's Organization and delivered a landmark speech at the 1992 UN Earth Summit. She contributed to drafting the Earth Charter and later served as executive director of the David Suzuki Foundation. Today, she focuses on the interconnected decline of biodiversity, worldviews, economies, language, traditional knowledge, and identity, holding an M.Sc. in Ethnoecology and pursuing a PhD in endangered language revitalization.

Precious friends.

I am so honoured to be here with you!

I want to first, acknowledge the land that we are on. We have come together here, on this Earth at The Hague, this beautiful place by the ocean. This is one of the greenest cities in the Netherlands, the ecosystems here are sandy beaches, heathland, dunes and forest.

I want to acknowledge the people who took care of this land so that we can enjoy it today.

Thank you to our Dutch hosts – Paul, Alide, Odette and everyone on the organizing committee, for hosting us here – thank you for your hospitality to gather here, in our collective endeavour to heal our relationship with the Earth.

My name is Severn Cullis-Suzuki, I am from Canada. My role in the Earth Charter is as one of the Charter Commissioners. I was a youth activist when I was invited to join the commission, 28 years ago. I am a lifelong activist for intergenerational justice, and my soul really needed to come here and share this moment with you all.

I have not traveled internationally in many years. We still have not yet found a technological alternative to the carbon burned in air travel, and I had to pause my privilege of polluting.

But on this occasion, the 25th anniversary of the Earth Charter, I had to come to be together with you. I needed to be amongst you, to restore my soul. I needed to be amongst those working to heal our relationship with the Earth, and our community of life.

As I reflect upon the Earth Charter, and the past 25 years, I want to invoke some themes.

The first theme I want to invoke is *friendship*.

COVID-19, itself one of the awesome reminders of the power of Nature, has reminded us of how special, and how important, it is to gather.

To gather, to celebrate, to be in-person, creating and strengthening community, this is to create resilience. And today, as we gather for a new ethics of care, it is an act of resistance.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

There are many reasons to gather. We are colleagues, comrades, co-conspirators. But in this spirit of [re-Declaring Our Responsibility to One Another, the Community of Life](#), and Future Generations, I want to honour [friendship](#) as the basis for our movement, our solidarity, and our strength.

I joined the movement in 1997, when I was 17 years old. I was a youth activist. As a child, concerned about the Earth, I started a club, began organizing, fundraising for causes and speaking out for the future. I spoke at the Earth Summit in 1992, which began my lifelong work of public speaking and advocacy.

As such, I was invited to be on the Earth Charter Commission – one of the greatest honours of my life. I met Mirian – not that much older than me, who was then, as she is now, the graceful convener, leader, and steward for the community around the Earth Charter. Sitting amongst Ruud Lubbers, Mercedes Sosa, Mikhail Gorbachev, Pauline Tangiora, Awraham Soetendorp, Maurice Strong, Steven Rockefeller and so many others, was an incredible affirmation that there was a global community of humans who wanted a different way of being for humanity.

And that has been a deep source of solace and hope for me in my life.

Back at home in Canada, I continued to advocate for intergenerational



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

justice, collaborating with many different activists and networks. I studied biology and ethnoecology, and received deep education from Indigenous peoples, learning how science and traditional knowledge can come together in “Two-Eyed Seeing” to help us properly manage ourselves in our environment. I advocated in the media on TV and in films, working for science and environment education, and have been working to support indigenous culture through language revitalization.

For the past four years, I was Executive Director at an environmental non-profit in Canada, the David Suzuki Foundation. Our work was no less than to work for societal transformation from our individualized focus today, to one where we know we are one with nature. Needless to say, we had our work cut out for us.

For those of us who care for the earth, so much of our work, is fight against. Against the encroachments on nature. Against the tyranny of profit, against capitalism. Against racism. Against colonial impacts, and the erosion of our communities and our shared commons. To fight against racism. Against sexism. Against violence. Against injustice.

And this brings me to the second theme I want to invoke, which is *vision to sustain us*.

The Earth Charter is a wholly different endeavour. It is a future-creating project. It is a dreaming project. To envision and build what we are for.

We cannot only be fighting *against*. We must also allow ourselves the beautiful, resourcing, empowering task of *dreaming*. Of *building*. Of *growing* what we are fighting for: an ethics of care, a whole new paradigm. We need a vision so beautiful, and so nourishing, that it feeds our hearts through these difficult times when we are hospicing the old ways of being, and of birthing the new.

Earth Charter is a space for all these conversations, and as a VISION for the future, it is a beacon that has never been more relevant.

Now that we are all friends, and we are anchored together in vision, the next piece I want to invoke, is the *acknowledgement of grief*.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Dear friends. You are here because of love, because you **love** this Earth, and the people in it. And when you love, you also grieve. Much has happened over the past 25 years. Much is happening today.

When we elevate ourselves to look at our global family, we have to mourn the harmful, Earth destroying, and power hoarding practices of the current paradigm continues. Humanity continues to harm itself, wreaking genocide and trauma. Huge injustices are unfolding. In Palestine, in Sudan, in many places in the human world, and in our family of life.

You have come from across this globe, and I know that you all have experienced losses in this time. You have personal losses, and also, you have collective ones. And in this, let us share our pain of loss, together.

I come to you today with a heavy heart for our climate losses.

It's summertime in Canada, and now summer means fire. Many of our forests are on fire. Several of our communities have been evacuated – meaning thousands of Canadians are environmental refugees, evacuated from their homes. We depend on frontlines support from other countries, regularly having to bring in firefighters from US, Australia and New Zealand.

Unfortunately, we are dealing with a madman next door, and his trade threats are distracting us from

climate truth, and not only are we approving new gas pipelines (which will take us ever farther from our climate commitments), we are changing laws to make building pipelines and mines easier by removing environmental processes and Indigenous consent.

This is just one report from Canada. I know that each of you carries the weight of what you are witnessing and experiencing in your home communities and nations: the impacts of Climate Change, and the doubling down of governments in the old, #Time'sup, destructive ways of the past.

On a global level: I have a very big climate grief that I need a community to share with, I grieve that last year, we surpassed passed 1.5 degrees of warming. We did not, as all our countries promised at the Paris COP, in 2015, we did not keep our promise to limit the Earth's warming. And we have to acknowledge this because the way we are fighting climate change isn't working. We have to do something different.

As we are all in the struggle together, as our freedoms are intertwined, I want to acknowledge grief. Grief is especially with us, as aware humans, with open hearts, who believe in the land, the Earth, and the community of life. We are witnessing massive changes to ecosystems and communities, and it is painful.

**“It is important to
acknowledge grief, as it
means that we love.
And because processing
this grief means we do
not just become angry.”**

Severn Cullis-Suzuki

It is important to acknowledge grief, as it means that we love.

And because processing this grief means we do not just become angry.

Here, as we mourn the losses, the Earth Charter again, is a source of guidance. An international charter that draws upon (and promotes!) the deep human traditions of spirituality, art, emotion, as well as practical guidelines for living in a different way. 25 years later, the Earth Charter now feels like an essential compass for the times that we are in today.

Because we love, so we will grieve. And this brings us to the next theme I want to invoke, which is our *foundation of memory*. There are many ways in which we can think of time, and the past. It is a continuum. But I feel that our history, the ancestors, and the work that they have done, is really our *spiritual foundation*. Knowing our ancestors, our history, is not only looking back, it gives us our rooted foundation. It provides us strength to move forward. Though humanity is always in uncharted waters, we are not orphans in time! We are in a long continuum of people.

Let this celebration and gathering affirm to you that you are *not alone* in this struggle, your work builds upon a rich foundation of memory. And these ancestors and history are a source of strength you can draw upon.

The final theme that came to me was, *transformative movements take time...*

Today the Earth Charter is 25 years old. Congratulations and deep gratitude to everyone for building this movement.

Transformative movements take time. Often, they are understood only in hindsight.

Even as my heart aches for the losses, I can see movements for justice unfolding before us. I want to share two examples:

Back home in Canada. This February, the Canadian Government formally recognized Aboriginal title of the entire territory of the Indigenous Haida Nation in the groundbreaking agreement: "Chiixuu jing Big Tide Haida Title Lands Agreement". The Governance and management of their archipelago is now being transitioned back to the Haida Nation over the next 4 years.

This incredible, ground-breaking movement, is the result of a 40 year-long title court case, a 50 year-long governance movement that established the Council of the Haida Nation, and the result of a 98 year movement negotiating for rightful title, the first Haida delegates went to Ottawa to negotiate for title in 1927.

The achievement today is the direct result of the individuals who put their work into that movement. My children are eating the fruit of the seed that was planted so long ago.

We are gathered here in multi-cultural Netherlands, and we are gathered on a meaningful day. Paul mentioned it at the beginning, today is “Keti Koti Breaking Chains”, Abolition day in the Netherlands.

Slavery was a huge global industry, and driver of the international economy. It powered the industrial revolution. Huge forces were in place to keep it so.

The international movement to abolish slavery took hundreds of years! But because people worked hard, for the future, for generations, the world changed fundamentally.

So today, we come together, to re-Declare Our Responsibility to One Another, the Community of Life, and Future Generations.

We do so in **friendship** – the great, generative force between us. We do so in service of the Earth Charter – a great **vision** that will **sustain us** and help us birth our dream of a new way of being. We acknowledge and help each other bear our **grief** of losses of this time, as it is part of our deep love for the Earth, life, and each other. We draw strength from our **foundation of memory**, and the knowledge that **transformative movements** take time.

How comforting and strengthening it is to my soul; to know I share this path with you.

Thank you.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

One Earth Community: Navigating the Challenges of our Time



Akpezi Ogbuigwe

Akpezi Ogbuigwe (Nigeria, Lagos) is member of the Earth Charter International Council. Dr. Akpezi Ogbuigwe is the Founder of Anpez Centre for Environment and Development (ACFED), a centre she founded in 1991 to respond to the huge environmental neglect and pollution of the Niger Delta Region. She is the promoter of The Star Advantage Network founded to mobilise and proliferate change actions to keep HOPE (Help One Person Everyday) alive and lighten up our world in every dimension. She serves as UNU-RCE's Regional Adviser for the region of Africa, where she facilitates cooperation and partnerships for sustainable development from local to global and vice versa.

This paper will speak to the topic through the lenses of the third sentence in the preamble to the Earth Charter² with the expedient words, ...in the midst of a magnificent diversity contain these of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one community with a common destiny.

The paper starts with a few reflections on the world we live in. It then explains how the global community can navigate the challenges of our time to the future we want using the Earth Charter (EC). Finally, the paper proposes that the EC's call for community is the critical ingredient needed to fill the ethical vacuum in managing our current challenges as we negotiate our paths towards 2030 and beyond.

We live on a breathtakingly beautiful planet. Yet, as we look around, we also see deep fractures—climate crises, wars, inequality, environmental degradation, atrocities of murder of innocent victims, widespread abuse of children, the terrible evil of human trafficking and modern-day slavery & more. This beautiful world can be so dark. We all have our stories. In June 2025, over 200 people were barbarically slaughtered in a series of attack across various communities in Benue State, Nigeria. These communities were dwelling in peace before sudden destruction struck (Abubakar, 2025). This incident of banditry, though under-reported, is a

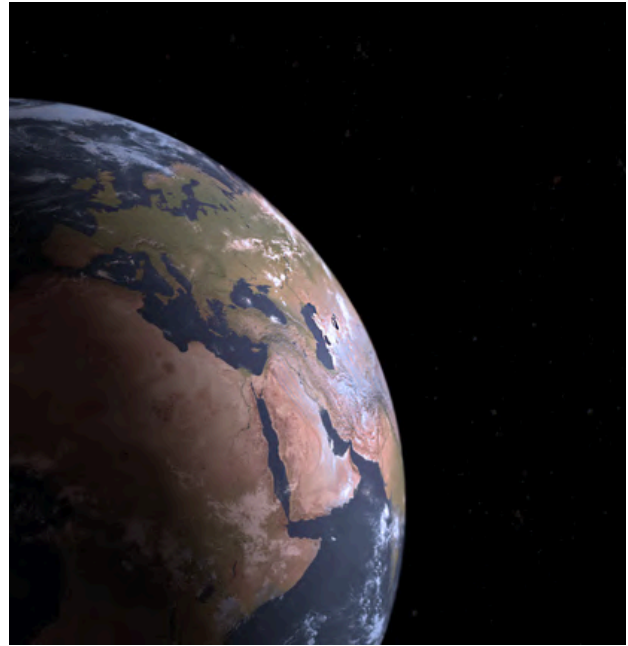


Photo Credit: Chepalos from pixabay

constant threat in my part of the world. The world indeed stands at a crossroads.

Our world is plagued by the misconception of Us versus Them. *Who are us and who are them?* The Earth Charter says we are an interconnected people in an interconnected universe, *one human family and one community.*

[What if we could shift our mindset from 'Us vs. Them'... to One Earth Community?](#)

What if we could choose, as the EC recommends, values like respect for nature, for people, shared responsibility, and peace—to guide us through current times?

On 25 September 2015, the 194 countries of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Development Agenda titled "Transforming our

world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” A major part of this Agenda was the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) and their associated 169 targets. This was a major step taken by the intergovernmental processes of the United Nations to help the global community in navigating the challenges of our time to a more sustainable future. This is 2025 and the wars aren’t ending. The world is more divided than it was in 2018. Going forward, there is the urgent need for an ethical compass to be injected in intergovernmental processes.

A good example of how this can be done is looking at the value the EC adds to the SDG’s:

1. No Poverty

Ethical Principle: Justice & Human Dignity

- Ensure fair distribution of resources and opportunities.
- Design poverty alleviation programs with respect for the autonomy and voices of the poor.

- Avoid exploitation and uphold social justice.

2. Zero Hunger

Ethical Principle: Equity & Compassion

- Promote fair access to nutritious food.
- Respect cultural food practices.
- Reduce food waste as a moral responsibility to others.

3. Good Health and Well-being

Ethical Principle: Right to Life & Care

- Provide non-discriminatory access to healthcare.
- Uphold patient confidentiality and informed consent.
- Address mental health with empathy and support.

4. Quality Education

Ethical Principle: Equality & Empowerment

- Ensure inclusive and equitable learning opportunities.
- Encourage critical thinking, integrity, and respect in school curricula.
- Eliminate barriers for girls, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

5. Gender Equality

Ethical Principle: Equality, Respect & Justice

- Promote equal rights, pay, and opportunities across all genders.
- End gender-based violence and abuse.
- Use policies that empower and protect women.

6. Clean Water and Sanitation

Ethical Principle: Right to Health & Stewardship

- Ensure universal access to clean water.
- Prioritize dignity in sanitation systems.
- Promote conservation through ethical stewardship of resources.

7. Affordable and Clean Energy

Ethical Principle: Sustainability & Justice

- Provide clean energy access to all, especially the poor and rural communities.
- Ensure ethical sourcing of energy materials.
- Reduce pollution to protect future generations.

8. Decent Work and Economic Growth

Ethical Principle: Fairness & Responsibility

- Enforce labor rights and prevent exploitation.
- Pay living wages and promote safe working conditions.
- Ensure economic inclusion of youth, women, and persons with disabilities.

9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Ethical Principle: Transparency & Inclusivity

- Develop infrastructure that serves all, including remote and marginalized groups.
- Promote ethical innovation that prioritizes social impact over profit.
- Ensure fair access to digital technologies.

10. Reduced Inequalities

Ethical Principle: Social Justice & Equity

- Address systemic biases in laws and institutions.
- Support redistributive policies and inclusion for minorities.
- Uphold the rights of migrants, refugees, and the vulnerable.

11. Sustainable Cities and Communities

Ethical Principle: Dignity & Participation

- Build cities that are inclusive, accessible, and safe for all.
- Engage communities in urban planning.
- Protect the homeless and ensure affordable housing.

12. Responsible Consumption and Production

Ethical Principle: Accountability & Environmental Justice

- Avoid waste and overconsumption.
- Promote ethical supply chains and fair trade.
- Educate consumers on the moral impact of their choices.

13. Climate Action

Ethical Principle: Intergenerational Justice & Stewardship

- Reduce dangerous emissions not just for today, but for future generations.
- Uphold climate justice for communities most affected.
- Engage in truthful communication about climate risks.

14. Life Below Water

Ethical Principle: Respect for Nature & Responsibility

- Protect marine ecosystems from human harm.
- Combat overfishing and preserve biodiversity.
- Promote shared global responsibility for oceans.

15. Life on Land

Ethical Principle: Stewardship & Intrinsic Value of Nature

- Combat deforestation and protect endangered species.
- Recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples to land.
- Promote harmony with the environment.

16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Ethical Principle: Integrity, Accountability & Human Rights

- Fight corruption and promote transparent governance.
- Ensure access to justice for all.
- Uphold freedom, safety, and participation in civic life.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

17. Partnerships for the Goals

Ethical Principle: Solidarity & Mutual Respect

- Build partnerships on trust, equality, and shared values.
- Avoid exploitative aid and instead promote true collaboration.
- Share resources and knowledge equitably.

The illustration here with the SDG's shows how the moral compass of the EC can be injected into the Goals. The tables below illustrate further why ethics matter in sustainable development:

Ethical Values Powering the SDGs Building Ethical Principles into the Sustainable Development Goals

Goal	Ethical Value 1	Eradicates	Ethical Value 2	Eradicates
1. No Poverty	Respect	Discrimination	Responsibility	Neglect
2. Zero Hunger	Care	Waste	Integrity	Deception
3. Good Health	Responsibility	Carelessness	Respect	Stigma
4. Quality Education	Integrity	Dishonesty	Justice	Inequality
5. Gender Equality	Respect	Prejudice	Justice	Oppression
6. Clean Water	Responsibility	Pollution	Care	Neglect
7. Clean Energy	Integrity	Corruption	Responsibility	Waste
8. Decent Work	Integrity	Exploitation	Responsibility	Irresponsibility
9. Innovation & Infrastructure	Integrity	Fraud	Responsibility	Negligence

Values in Action: Ethics for Every Goal

Goal	Ethical Value 1	Eradicates	Ethical Value 2	Eradicates
10. Reduced Inequalities	Justice	Discrimination	Respect	Exclusion
11. Sustainable Cities	Care	Destruction	Responsibility	Neglect
12. Consumption & Production	Responsibility	Wastefulness	Respect	Overconsumption
13. Climate Action	Responsibility	Denial	Reverence	Destruction
14. Life Below Water	Care	Pollution	Reverence	Exploitation
15. Life on Land	Reverence	Destruction	Responsibility	Neglect
16. Peace & Justice	Justice	Corruption	Respect	Violence
17. Partnerships	Respect	Selfishness	Responsibility	Disunity

Call to Action:

- Build the SDGs on a foundation of values, not just metrics.
- Be the difference: act with care, justice, respect, and integrity.
- The world needs ethical changemakers — starting with you.

Navigating the challenges of our time with the EC would engender fairness, justice, respect, and care for the greater community of life, and to future generations. Without ethics, the SDG's and other strategies to navigate our current problems can be achieved in ways that harm, exclude, or exploit. Ethical framing and approaches make the goals and other intergovernmental processes like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP) personal and actionable.

The Earth Charter doesn't offer a quick fix. It offers a new story. Like the anonymous (n.d.). anecdotal story of "The Ants in Bottle." [6] An anonymous observer (OkeOghene) once came across a bottle of water left open overnight, only to discover dozens of ants struggling inside. At first glance, the scene seemed chaotic—as if the ants were trampling one another to survive. Disgusted by what appeared to be selfish behavior, the person chose not to intervene.

However, two hours later, curiosity led OkeOghene back to the bottle, and what he saw was astonishing: the ants had formed a living structure, a floating pyramid. The ones on top supported those below, and over time, the ants rotated positions. Those submerged would climb up for relief while others voluntarily took their place. There was no panic or scrambling—only organized, mutual effort.

Deeply moved, OkeOghene used a spoon to help the ants escape. As they climbed out, one ant—nearly safe—noticed a weaker one slipping. Instead of escaping alone, it turned back, clutched the struggling ant, and held on. The observer then helped both to safety.

This moment left a lasting impression. The ants displayed more compassion, discipline, and cooperation than many humans. Where people often prioritize personal gain, power and abandon the vulnerable, these tiny insects showed true unity. The experience brought OkeOghene not just admiration but shame—shame at human indifference and division.

From that day forward, he understood: **real strength lies in solidarity and if one wants to learn how to live with integrity and care, perhaps they should start by observing the ants.**

This is community. A community where:

- The vulnerable are lifted up
- Indigenous wisdom is valued
- Future generations are considered
- Every person, species, and ecosystem has inherent worth.

The EC is a call to community as we navigate our challenges confidently into the future. It challenges each of us to be stewards, not just consumers, profiteers or rulers. Collaborators, not competitors.

Incorporating ethical principles into each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) means grounding every goal in values like human dignity, justice, fairness, respect, responsibility, transparency, intergenerational equity, and inclusiveness.

Call to action: The Community Spirit

Our world is in flux. But the solutions are already within us.

Let us practice the Earth Charter—not just read it. Let us honor the vision of the Peace Palace—not just admire it.

We are not separate nations, faiths, or races, we are “One Earth Community.” We can live and thrive together.

The visionary Buckminster Fuller once remarked “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.”

From local communities to the global polity

From the village market to the corporate world

Stewards arise with steadfast hands

They plant the seeds of hope and care,

For a world where all can thrive and share.

As cultures mingle, Differences celebrated, unity found,

A world of peace, where conflicts are managed with dignity,

Where justice reigns and wars abate

A world where dignity and respect never fade

A world where minds are empowered in every place.

Values that work when life doesn't

A worldwide community, for sustainability's embrace. Endless energy Boundless strength

From this 25th anniversary of the EC let us dream, let us freely share and let us dare,

To make this task of Kindling a Worldwide Community for Sustainability as our collective endeavor

For in our hands lies the power to envision, build and nurture

A world where all life can truly be free. Unity in diversity.

This will diffuse the ecological, relational, spiritual and political climate of our world.



Image Credit: Lina Darjan

**“Our world is plagued by
the misconception of Us
versus Them.**

**Who are Us and who are
Them?**

**What if we could shift our
mindset from ‘Us vs.
Them’... to One Earth
Community?”**

Akpezi Ogbuigwe

Conclusion

The global community missed this opportunity to embrace The Earth Charter in 1992. According to Steven Rockefeller (2025) during the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, “they wanted to go deep - and grapple with the underlying problems of the world today.” He explained that “reason, science and technology can be used for evil, particularly when people are given extraordinary powers.” He said “unlike other international documents done by international lawyers, EC offers ethical and spiritual dimensions, principles of nature, human centered ethics and is also scientifically inclusive.”

Let’s not make the same mistake again, particularly as we go forward in intergovernmental processes towards COP 30 and the 2030 global aspirations.

Yes, the world has advanced in scientific models and algorithms, in scientific research and artificial intelligence and we saw all these in the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. But we also saw the dark side of growth without ethics, medical science without equity, governance without justice.

In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr, “True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice, the presence of community.” (1964)

The presence of Respect extinguishes Discrimination

- When you truly respect others, you no longer judge them unfairly.

The presence of Responsibility extinguishes Neglect

- Taking ownership ensures nothing important is left undone or ignored.

The presence of Care extinguishes Indifference

- Genuine care means you can’t look away from someone’s pain or need.

The presence of Integrity extinguishes Deception

- Living honestly leaves no room for lies or hidden motives.

The presence of Justice extinguishes Oppression

- Where justice thrives, power cannot be used to abuse or exploit.

The presence of Reverence extinguishes Destruction

- When we deeply value something –life, nature, truth—we protect it.

The presence of Trust extinguishes Suspicion

- In an atmosphere of trust, fear and doubt fade away.

The presence of Resilience extinguishes Defeat

- Resilient people may fall, but they never stay down.

Key messages are:

1. EC offers Ethical and spiritual dimensions, Principles of nature, Human centered ethics and is also scientifically inclusive.
2. You cannot have a future from a present that is contrary. The future we want must be grounded in a present embedded in ethical foundations.
3. All voices must be valued. Community is a call for unity not uniformity and control nor Us versus You.
4. Peace is not going to make itself. Peace making requires action. Yours and mine.

Epilogue

In the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one community with a common destiny.

'Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life.' (Earth Charter, Preamble)

No night remains night when overtaken by stars.

Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

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Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Actioning Intergenerational Collaboration, Climate Justice and Peace



Elizabeth Wathuti

Elizabeth Wathuti is a multi-award winning passionate Kenyan Environmentalist and Young African Climate Leader. She is the visionary Founder of the Green Generation Initiative (GGI) and recently won the TIME100 Impact Awards in Singapore. She has previously received the Africa Green Person of the year award and has also been named among 100 Most Influential people in Africa multiple times.

She is also one of the Commissioners on the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW), an advisory board member at Africa's first Water Fund, and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies and Community Development.

Over the last 2 Days of the conference, we have discussed a lot about Intergenerational Collaboration, Climate Justice and Peace.

As most of the speakers highlighted yesterday, our hope should be actionable. Putting the Earth Charter into practice so that in the future, at Earth Charter conferences, we not only speak how to do things better but how we have moved the needle of these principles through actionable progress globally.

I will try and explain community action in the best way I know how, through my story, my journey and the work we do at the Green Generation Initiative.

First · Intergenerational Collaboration

Where I come from, elders sit under trees with young people. Stories are



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

shared. Wisdom is passed down. But equally, new ideas bubble up from the young – ideas that keep our communities resilient and evolving.

Though the youngest member of the Global Commission on the Economics of Water (GCEW), I was proud to contribute alongside senior experts in developing a report on valuing water and shaping perspectives on how water can influence global governance.

This opportunity was later known by my government, and I was appointed to serve in a Nairobi Rivers commission, a commission formed toward rehabilitating the Nairobi river basin which supplies water to the city.

Further, being a youth, I was able to showcase young people leading waste management activities who are now key stakeholders in cleaning up and rehabilitating the river.

The reason I have given this example is to show how intergenerational collaboration builds the future. From senior citizens believing in youth to a youth leading climate solution globally and with a ripple effect being felt locally.

The Future of the Earth Charter:

The Earth Charter should consider having a youth caucus that is actively involved in crafting the future of The Earth Charter, and even most

importantly for youth to learn from the Elders on how to better engage policy and multilateral processes.

Second · Climate Justice A Moral Imperative and Breaking the Cycle

I was inspired by Wangari Mathai's action of tree growing in my community, and that is what drove my purpose from a young age in the village.

It was Wangari's choice to break the cycle of rampant degradation.

Since I am the senior generation for the little children in schools in Kenya, I am to continue in breaking the cycle of degradation, just as Wangari Mathai did for me and many other children then, when we were young.

As the Green generation initiative, tree growing and setting up vertical gardens in schools is our legacy project and will forever remain a legacy project.

Why do we believe in tree planting with children? Because:

- It builds environmentally conscious citizens in growing climate risky worlds, which needs more ambassadors.
- It makes schools serene.
- It provides children with fruit in and out of season.
- And addresses food insecurity and builds resilient communities in communities that contributed the least to climate change.

Climate justice means recognizing that those who did the least to cause this crisis are the ones suffering and will suffer the most.

Indigenous communities safeguard 80% of natural resources. Yet after capitalist corporations have finished extracting resources in other places, now we are seeing interest in extracting resources in sacred rainforests and rivers which these communities have preserved.

Surprisingly, further, these Indigenous communities have been preserving ecosystem services for urban communities to enjoy down-stream, such as water sources, yet they are left out of social economic benefits.

Our work at GGI with our partners aimed to address this climate justice issue.

We have a Water fund whose goal is to empower communities in catchments to continue taking care of the water catchments, but corporates have to pay for their good will of communities.

How it works:

The Water fund is an endowment fund that is funded by downstream user's beverage companies, water utility companies, and hydropower companies, so communities can grow indigenous trees in their community lands as well as high value fruit trees, like avocado and macadamia, to earn a decent living.

“We must move beyond tokenism and include young people and communities, especially from the Global South, as equal partners in decision-making.”

Elizabeth Wathuti

These are small initiatives that push for climate justice for those who contribute the most in conserving our environment.

We must move beyond tokenism and include young people and communities, especially from the Global South, as equal partners in decision-making. If communities that preserve our nature throw in the towel, the world will move so fast that the worst that economic progress won't matter under the devastating impact of climate change.

Lastly, let's talk about Peace: Beyond the Absence of War

Too often, when we say "peace", we think of silence after conflict. But real peace is so much more. Peace is clean air to breathe. Peace is fertile soil to grow food. Peace is safe water to drink. Peace is a forest standing tall instead of being cut down for profit. Peace is when communities have the power to protect what gives them life.

We have seen in our countries how the climate crisis is a fight for nature's ecosystem services. Communities fighting over water, pasture and access to what others might have preserved when their resources dwindle.

We have also seen how women lose livelihoods, and some are forced into sex trades because where they used to fish shrimp and crabs to feed their families, there are no more fish stocks because of degradation of mangroves.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

We work towards landscape restoration with local communities to restore forests, mangroves, and catchment to ensure not only will we build back nature but also ensure communities thrive in dignity.

What will be our Legacy?

What will be the Actional Legacy of The Earth Charter in this new polarized world on

Intergenerational Collaboration,

Climate Justice and Peace?

And how many more Wangari Mathai's, will The Earth Charter create for the youth to lead the new future?

Thank You!



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Youth Education and Planetary Ethics



Amanda Bennett Rivera

Amanda Bennett Rivera is a fourth-grade teacher in New Jersey with roots in Costa Rica and a background spanning international education, youth engagement, and sustainable development. She holds degrees in Experimental Psychology (USC), Public Policy (University of Maryland), and Environment, Development & Peace (UPEACE), and has worked as a Programme Manager for youth and sustainable development initiatives, taught English in Costa Rica and Peru, and interned with public health and civic engagement organizations.

Last week, some Earth Charter Young Leaders invited me to write a letter to the Earth Charter – an opportunity I saw as a chance to pause and reflect on my journey so far as part of this global movement. Ever since I first read the Earth Charter, I have wondered what my life might have been like if I had encountered it as a child, a teenager, or even as a college student. For the past seven years, that question has lingered as a big “what if” in my life. But as I began writing that letter, I realized the Earth Charter may have been with me all along. Many of us know its history and the countless people it has inspired, and as a young child from Costa Rica, a small Central American country that has earned global recognition for abolishing the army and environmental conservation efforts, I am certain I benefited from environmentalists and activists who embraced its vision of a more just, sustainable, and peaceful planet.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lens

I would like to note that when I refer to the Earth Charter, I mean more than the document itself. I am also speaking of the visionaries who brought it to life over 25 years ago, and those of us today who are carrying it forward and helping it evolve.

I first read the Earth Charter at the age of twenty-six, when I had the incredible opportunity to join the Earth Charter International Secretariat team as the administrative and project assistant. My favorite part of working at ECI was that no two days were ever the same. The people putting the Earth Charter into action understand that love and creativity are essential for ensuring each project has a real, positive impact. Through the growth that comes from being part of such a movement, I became ECI’s youth programme manager, expanding my network exponentially and forming invaluable friendships with inspiring young people around the world.

At the same time, I pursued a master’s degree in Environment, Development, and Peace from the University for Peace, where I learned alongside classmates from diverse backgrounds and nationalities – all while studying in my country of origin. Last year, emboldened by these experiences and personal growth, I decided to move back to the United States, where I had previously lived for about fifteen formative years before returning to Costa Rica in 2017, and became an elementary school teacher.

“The Earth Charter has taught me that learning does not end when a lesson plan concludes or an exam is finished. I want my students to see the interconnectedness in what they learn, live, and dream.”

Amanda Bennett Rivera

One day, my students and I read Ray Bradbury's 1954 short story "All Summer in a Day." In it, children who grew up on Venus eagerly await the first sunny day in years — except for one little girl who remembers the sun from her time on Earth. That day, I identified with her. Having moved twice between Costa Rica and the United States, I have found it challenging to adjust to a more distant relationship with nature. I also thought of how, like that little girl, we on Earth today might be experiencing a deeper connection to nature than future generations will — especially given the accelerating pace of the interconnected planetary crises we face.

As a teacher, I feel a deep responsibility to pass on the lessons I've learned from the Earth Charter movement and from others working alongside us, guided by similar unifying principles.

One principle that has been especially meaningful to me is subprinciple 2b:

Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.

The more I reflect on this principle, the more sense it makes — especially as it stems from Principle 2:

Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.

These values are central in my classroom and in my life.

Becoming an educator with my vision shaped by the Earth Charter has taught me that learning does not end when a lesson plan concludes or an exam is finished. I want my students to see the interconnectedness in what they learn, live, and dream. Surrounded daily by the imagination of my fourth graders, I've collected countless "aha moments" from our classroom.

For example, after two days studying Wangari Maathai — the late Kenyan activist, founder of the Green Belt Movement, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate — I showed my students photographs of her, including one of her planting a tree with then-President Obama. Their jaws dropped when they discovered she was Black. I was equally stunned that they had not pictured someone who looked more like them, especially when about three-quarters of my students are of African descent and the rest of the class has Latin American roots.

That moment reminded me to make connections more explicit. We can use what we learn in math about percentages to interpret real-world statistics. How is it possible that these bright minds live in a country where only 9% of people working in science, technology, engineering, and math are Black, and only 8% identify as Hispanic?

And how might the world transform if everyone embraced a role of Earth leadership, regardless of their profession?

This past year, my goal was simply to become familiar with the classroom and working with young minds. This next year, I want to embody the Earth Charter principles in ways that inspire my students even more. I have loved seeing them express themselves through theater, the arts, and public speaking. My aim now is to weave ecological integrity into our lessons – even in a setting removed from nature – and to collaborate with fellow educators around the world through this network.

The image below shows a note from a student apologizing for her class being too chatty. At the end, she wrote, “I love how you care for the



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Earth.” My first thought was, “Yes! At least some of this is getting through.” But then I realized I don’t want to be the only teacher known for caring about our community of life. I don’t want to be like the little girl in Bradbury’s story, the only one who remembers the sun. I want us all to work together so that future generations are not deprived of their connection to nature and to each other.

Being part of the Earth Charter movement has shown me that people worldwide share these feelings of motivation and hope. I am deeply grateful for the work done over the past twenty-five years to transform that hope into action.

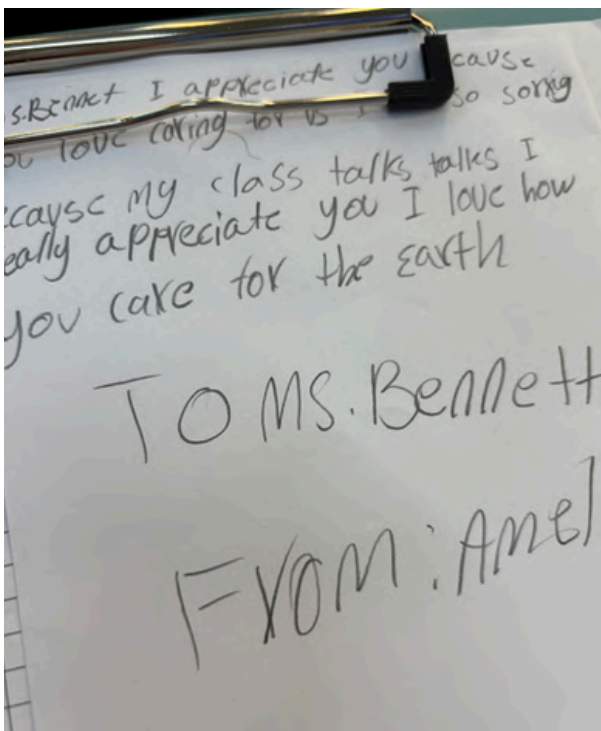


Photo Credit: Amanda Bennett



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

The Power of Hope: Governance, Spirituality, Ethics and Beauty



Heather Eaton

Heather Eaton is a Full Professor at Saint Paul University (Ottawa) with an interdisciplinary Ph.D. spanning ecology, feminism, and theology. Her work focuses on integral ecology, ethics, and religious responses to ecological crises, with recent projects touching on Earth dynamics, gender and leadership, animal rights, and nonviolence. She serves on the board of Worldviews: Global Religions, Environment and Culture, previously served on the AAR's Religion and Ecology steering committee, and is past president of the Canadian Theological Society.

Introduction

The Brundtland Report in 1987, Our Common Future, the Rio Declaration in 1992, and the Earth Charter in 2000, represent shifts in imagining not only interconnected global societies, but an Earth Community. Multiple efforts towards ecological and bio-democracy, ecological civilizations, rights of Nature and environmental citizenship invite a vision for planetary perspectives, inclusive of diverse communities of Life. These efforts change the framework from sovereign states and imperialist politics to Earth communities. Planetary conscience and consciousness are significant steps towards sustainability. The Earth Charter provides widely shared guiding principles for a truly sustainable way of life. We are grateful for the work of Mikhail Gorbachev, Maurice Strong, Steven Rockefeller, Wangari Maathai and many others who envisioned the charter, and saw what is needed for the living Earth community.

The vision and values of the Earth Charter - participatory democracy, social and gender justice, ecological integrity, economic sustainability, peace and nonviolence - are more important than ever. The geopolitical situation today is not the same as it was 25 years ago. Deterioration of human and specifically gender rights, and intensifying violence in Ukraine, Iran, Syria, Sudan, and Haiti are alarming. The genocide in Gaza, the escalating tyranny of the United States, the realignment of geopolitical

powers, and military expansions are remaking a world order based on conflict rather than cooperation. The International Criminal Court seems paralysed. In June 2025, NATO agreed to increase defense funding to five percent. Many countries are increased military weaponry. What has happened to a moral compass?

Meanwhile ecological decline in planetary systems (climate, water, forests, biodiversity) and in bioregions and ecosystems, accelerates. All of these produce social stress, insecurities, poverty, and conflict. Anthropocentrism remains intractable.

We must face these realities with more honesty, courage and intelligence. We cannot afford to be naïve and superficial. We need to address the gaps between the political, ecological and moral decline and the vision and ethics of the Earth Charter. Otherwise, our talk of hope and change is lovely, but ineffective. Furthermore, we cannot leave these difficulties to the next generation: we cannot leave this mess as the inheritance to youth.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

What might help us make these changes? While there are countless pathways forward, my brief comments are in three sections. The first considers governance, vision and common ground. The second ponders a role for spirituality, ethics and beauty.

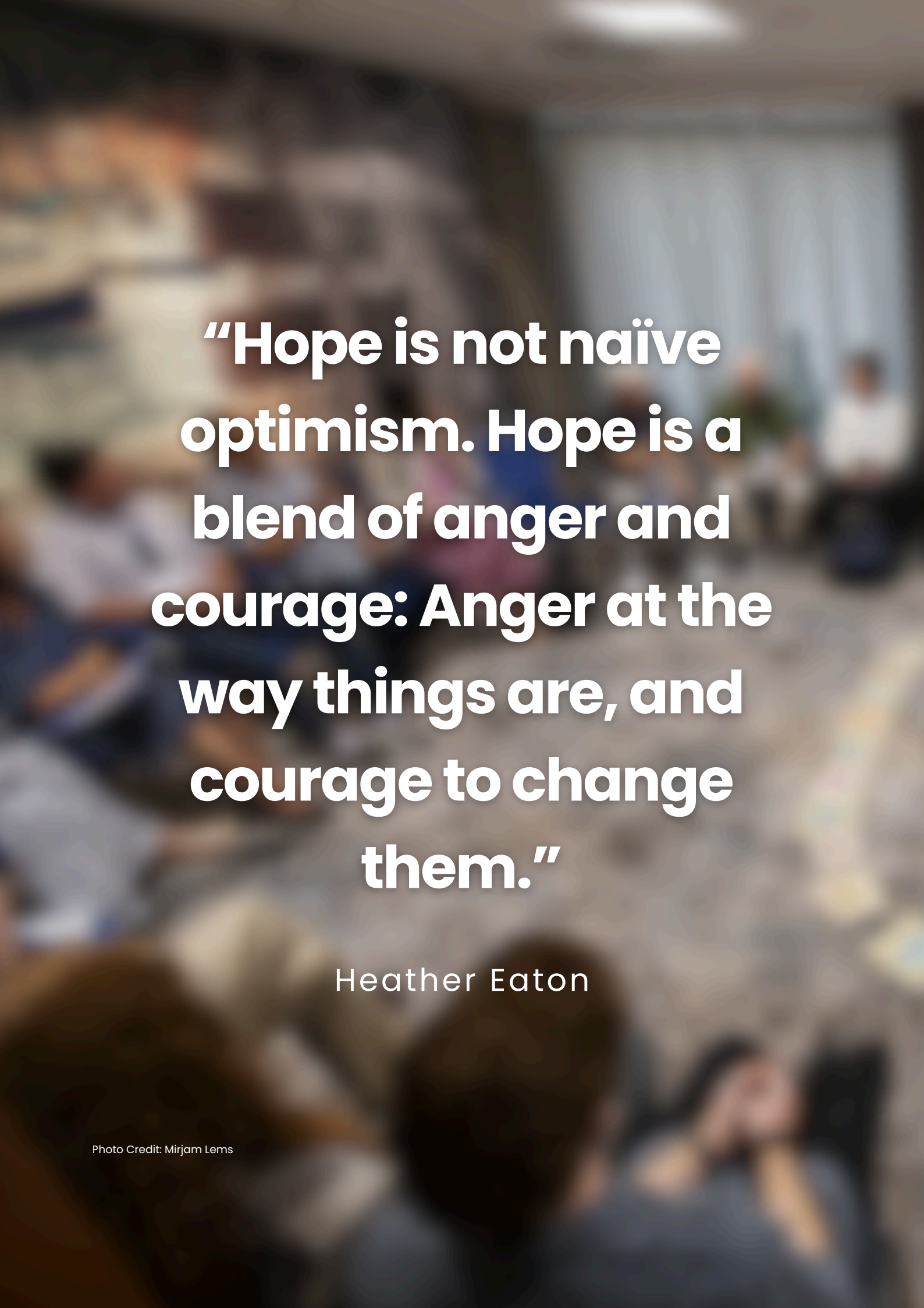
Governance, Democracy and Global Visions

In the face of geopolitical realignments, power shifts, military invasions and economic turmoil, governments are facing uncertainties and difficult decisions. Governments are congealing into economic agendas that benefit few. The relations between governance and democracy are also unstable. Democratic principles being eroded in several countries and contexts. One outcome is cynicism about democracy and depoliticized, inert citizenry. Another is 'global' civic groups using the Internet to reshape political participation.

Many claim that the only protective shield from inequities and totalitarianism is democracy. Democracy dilutes power, resists the hardening of ideologies, and allows for conflict and dissent within peaceful mechanisms of negotiation. Democracy, strongly supported by the Earth Charter, continues to be the most inclusive form of governance, despite failings and frailties.

However, there is a different dimension of governance that is also important to consider: that of the tension between nation states and planetary activities. There is an incongruity between notions of state sovereignty and biospheric dynamics. The planet is a plethora of living systems, and functions in an integrated, interconnected and entangled biosphere: living Earth communities. The health of ecosystems, bioregions and planetary processes - such as climate change - requires understanding and respecting planetary systems within the biosphere. It is important to comprehend that disturbances in planetary systems are difficult to address, not only due to jurisdiction and national sovereignty, but also because political and ecosystem boundaries are unrelated.

This tension between nation states and ecological and planetary realities needs further discussion. It is fraught with challenges: cultural diversities, political autonomy, integrated and independent economies. And yet, we live in a thin layer of culture within a vast expanse of nature. The primary reality is the planet and the biosphere. Nation states are a secondary, and illusive reality. What happens to planetary health determines cultural, political and personal health. The Earth Charter proposes a subtle path that both respects cultural diversities while acknowledging the foundational



**“Hope is not naïve
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Heather Eaton

elements of the biosphere and the planet.

The task of reimagining global principles and governance is an ecological and ethical imperative and a political necessity for a viable future. There needs to be a unifying vision that prioritizes planetary wellbeing over national sovereignty. Unless there is a unifying narrative sufficiently broad to respect cultural diversities, encased in democratic principles and actions, then civilizations, humanity, and planetary life are threatened. The Earth Charter provides such a unifying vision.

The preamble addresses the fact that humanity is part of a larger evolving universe, within the complex biosphere of Earth. This understanding of “global” is one reason why the Charter is unique and of immense import. It is a “declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century.” The Charter emphasizes that global interdependence and shared responsibilities for “the human family and the larger living world” are the global tasks. Despite cultural diversities, humanity and the larger Earth community share a common destiny.

Common ground and a global vision are also needed to respond to the inequities and limits of economic globalization, the emergence of a

global civil society, and concern for and responsibility towards the whole Earth community. The four pillars of the Earth Charter are clear guidelines for governance: Respect and Care for the Community of Life; Ecological Integrity; Social and Economic Justice; and Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace. They signal a change in vision, and a new moment in human history. In general terms, they share an ethical appeal and vision for the common good of humanity, while diminishing an anthropocentric bias and strengthening the notion of a planetary ecological community. There are debates to be had, such as the consequence of emphasizing vision, values, and ethics over politics and economic power relations and structures. Tensions between national sovereignty and planetary ecological communities are far from being determined theoretically or engaged practically. Yet, the Earth Charter offers a way forward, within the diversities and complexities of a postmodern world and differentiated yet interconnected Earth communities.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lens

Spirituality, Ethics and Beauty

Spiritual experiences of the natural world are fundamental to most religions and to many cultures. They are powerful, animating, orienting experiences. Wonder and awe are classical responses to spiritual awakenings and attentiveness to the natural world. Religious texts, poets, mystics and nature writers are replete with expressions of wonder and awe that blend nature and spirit. The natural world has been a primary source of spiritual insight, guidance and inspiration for millennia.

Spirituality, at its core, is a discipline to discern profound aspects within, and overall orientation to, existence. Spirituality is not beliefs. Spirituality is like breathing, as intimate and as vital as breath. It is about desire, a zest for life, and the ability to feel awe and wonder. Spirituality is the capacity to experience reverence in the face of the immensity and elegance of existence. Developing a spiritual consciousness is often described as moving from death to life, from sleep



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

to consciousness, from illusion to enlightenment, from confinement to liberation, ignorance to awareness, or from confusion to clarity. Spirituality awakens, educates and inspires. It reinforces and revitalizes, and gives us strength, perspective, and insight.

Spiritual disciplines and processes encourage both depth and breadth. They allow us to deepen, and to embrace the profound mysteries within ourselves, the Earth community and the living cosmos. Spiritual journeys also enlarge our horizons, fostering radical openness to the immensities that extent far beyond our knowing. Spirituality is radical: from radix meaning to the root. It is about awakening, awareness, and action. Spirituality sustains resistance, resilience, and revolutions for social and ecological transformation.

We need a spiritual vision that teaches us how to be present to the Earth, on Earth's terms. Spiritualities come from the realm of insights rather than data. Spiritualities are teachers of consciousness. A spiritual vision adequate for our ecological era requires an awakening to the Earth. If we contemplate the elegance of the Earth, and the fact that we emerged from and are animated by these great processes, we are inspired and energized. Such reflection informs and sustains a vision – a place from which to think and act. Such awareness leads to a profound spiritual and ethical awakening, and insightful political actions.

Ethics is about right relations. It requires deconstructing and critiquing, with the goal towards constructive social change. The work of justice - social, gender, racial, intergenerational - relies on ethics. Yet for a sustainable future, we need a broad understanding of ethics. Human concerns and social justice frameworks are not enough. Eco and climate justice frameworks are often anthropocentric. We need ecological ethics that affirms the intrinsic value of the natural world. The shift to planetary thinking, and solidarity with the biosphere, needs to accelerate.

The Earth Charter affirms planetary ethics for the Earth community. When we become aware that we are immersed in this great Earth community, it evokes a spiritual awakening: planetary consciousness and conscience. The Earth Charter is a call to understand the biosphere, and to know we emerged from and belong to this living biosphere. It is to appreciate integral ecology: all is interconnected. There is no future without ecological integrity and stability.

The last comments are about beauty: What is more beautiful than the natural world? Yet beauty is often trivialized. Those engaged in the serious work of governance and eco/social change rarely consider beauty to be an essential element for transformation. Many working in justice and ethics realms are trained



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

to be critical: to deconstruct, find fault lines, omissions, bias and shortcomings. These are all important skills. Yet, they can become habits of mind that inhibit other modes of knowing, such as experiencing beauty. People notice a glorious sunset, appreciate it, and then return to the real work of analyzing, evaluating and judging.

Experiencing beauty is considered to be ... nice ... but not relevant to social change, climate justice, and factual considerations. I think this is incorrect. Experiencing beauty is integral to human knowing, well-being, and ethical optics. Beauty informs and strengthens ethics and evokes reverence. Beauty can lift spirits, expand interiority, calm anxieties, offer clarity, and inspire insights. Perhaps we can add a medicinal dose of beauty to each day. We may be surprised by the

joy, inspiration, radical hope, and gratitude that experiences of beauty can nurture.

Together spirituality, ethics, beauty give us the wisdom, insights and strength to speak truth to power. 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.

We also 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).

Most importantly, the Earth can nurture hope. Trees and flowers blossom, bees pollinate, and animals have offspring: these are extraordinary feats of hope. The Earth is alive, and this nurtures hope. The Earth Charter provides visions, pathways, ethics and spiritual support. It can nurture the energy and hope for the future.





Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

The Earth Charter as Greenfire



Mary Philip (Joy)

Mary (Joy) Philip is an Indian scholar and former Professor of Zoology in Bangalore, who went on to earn a doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. Her work bridges the natural sciences and theology, shaped by a journey across unexpected places and vocations that she approaches with passion and an eye toward the resources each context makes possible.

“Teachings come from everywhere when you open yourself to them. That’s the trick of it really, to open yourself to everything and everything opens itself to you.” (Wagamese, 2013)

These are the words of the late Canadian Indigenous author, Richard Wagamese, and it is so true. The common perception is that if we don’t read books by certain authors, our education is somehow wanting and most often these authors are dead white men. However, it is a very colonial understanding of what education is. Isn’t it time that we broke out of that stronghold and opened ourselves to teaching and learning in a different way? After all, as the Lakota proverb says, *“Knowledge is rooted in all things – the world is a library.”*

These past 3 days we heard about the importance of the Earth Charter on how it is a living compass that can bring about healing and resilience (speech by Laura Rodriguez, Earth Charter Conference, July 1, 2025) and how the Earth Charter is what holds the tension between the desperate present and a hopeful future. (words of Rabbi Awaharam, Earth Charter Conference, July 1, 2025) I am a hopelessly hopeful person, especially when it comes to the future of our planet and the Earth Charter has a prominent role to play in it as far as education goes.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

To use vocabulary connected to our times, we are called to a decolonial way of engaging in education and it is also where the future of education lies. We have to remember that it was men from 5 countries that decided what university education will look like as it is now. Ramon Grosfoguel, the Puerto Rican sociologist and Professor of Chicano/Latino Studies in the Department of Ethnic Studies at University of California, Berkeley said the following, *"How is it possible that men from ... five countries – Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA – achieved such an epistemic privilege to the point that their knowledge today is considered superior over the knowledge of the rest of the world? How did they come to monopolize the authority of knowledge in the world? Why is it that what we know today as social, historical, philosophical, or Critical Theory is based on the socio-historical experience and world views of men from these five countries?"* (Grosfoguel, 2013) And the sad thing is that we are still reading them even though we know that there are others we can read and other resources we can use. It is about thinking outside the box when it comes to education. Ask decolonial praxis urges, *"it is time to delink and disobey."* (Wayne Yang, 2012)

When ECI met in Rollins College in Florida, in 2024, my proposal at the parallel session on education was to see education **not** as *"a set of issues*

or problems but as a landscape we move into, to participate and partake of, where we slowly inhabit this new arena, cultivate new set of relationships, and thus new set of perspectives." (Wayman, 2021) I still hold that position. What happens when we see education as a landscape to be explored is that we start to see differently; we sense differently; and we relate differently.

I also impressed upon the importance of indigenous ways of learning – of Storywork, Re-story-ation (leading to restoration). For Robin Wall Kimmerer, re-story-ation has to be an essential part of education and it is *"to return our stories to the land and to remember how to hear the stories the land tells."* (Pech-Cárdenas, 2023) In other words, it is to listen to the voice of the earth so that when we hear the stories, we not only remember but we re-member those and that from the past bringing about restoration. Education through "storywork" was the contribution of Jo-ann Archibald (2019). Both restoryation and storywork are decolonizing methodologies because it questions hegemonic systems of education and that is what we are called to engage in.

So, how do we envision and engage in such a kind of education that is undergirded by decolonial praxis? First of all, we need educators who are willing to be "seen face." Then we need resources, be they textbooks

and other modes that provide knowledge. But, what about the source of ALL knowledge that we have somehow failed to access – the planet itself. Or, as the Lakota proverb reminds us, the world is a library. Many years ago, Rachel Carson reminded us – “In ... every curving beach, in every grain of sand there is the story of the earth.” (Carson, 1998) The Earth and earthlings including us are a compendium of stories, if only we would pay attention!

I am an educator who taught zoology for the first 15 years of my professional life and now in the theological arena. Both, from the field of science and theology there is data to prove that nature, the birds and the bees and the animals and the trees have voice, and they are telling us things. In the Christian Scriptures that I am familiar with, it says, *“But ask the animals, and they will teach you, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you; or speak to the earth, and it will teach you, or let the fish in the sea inform you.”* (Job 12: 7-8, NRSV.) This is about listening to the voice of the earth. In the world of science just attach a few electrodes to a tree stem or the soil and you will hear their language and how they communicate. However, how many of us actually do it, that is, ask the animals or the birds or the trees. We have phone apps, or fitbit things or the TV weather person and that is what or who we rely on to check the weather for the day, what the

temperature is, whether it will rain or snow and what not. I grew up watching the birds and the insects to know if it was going to rain or not, or if it was going to be a hot day or not. And, believe me, it was quite accurate. If only we listened to what the earth is telling be it through a tree or a tsunami.

Education, if it is to be effective for the times we are in, it needs to be participatory. This is what Linda Tuhiwai smith refers to as “seen face” I referred to earlier, where the educator is “seen as an active participant in the community, gaining credibility and building relationships.” (Archibald, 2019) If I want to teach about sustainable development to my students, then I have to live that out in the community. This is where the importance of seeing education as a landscape comes into play. It makes it possible to get an idea about “student emotions, identity and agency” and then envision ways of teaching that are emotionally engaging. (Archibald, 2019) The interrelatedness of education and the context that includes the cultural, social, political and historical issues is crucial for any learning to happen. Participatory learning results in contextually sensitive and not to mention culturally relevant responsive consciousness and practices. This then lays the foundation for an education that has at its core the 4 “R”s – respect, responsibility, reverence and reciprocity. (Archibald, 2019)

I will now highlight what I see as the role that Earth Charter plays in the future of education.

If the EC takes on a decolonial vision it will foster “dancing minds, a concept that the late Nobel prize winner and author Toni Morrison (1996) promoted. The “dancing mind” is an educational craft that requires one to see the possibilities while alert to the danger that lurks at the same time. It is independent and yet collaborative and needs a hospitable community. It is not about perfection but participation. There is “celebration and anguish, there are flukes and errors in judgment...” (Morrison, 1996) Learning here is very contextual where both the “entitled as well as the dispossessed get to experience one’s own mind dancing with another’s and the environment in which this work is done is welcoming, supportive.” I like to believe that is what the EC can do, but it needs to be updated in more ways than one. We can of course argue that the principles are universal in its application. However, as the Brazilian bishop Cornelius Castodiaris said, the universal only speaks dialect. The application of the Earth Charter principles, if it is to make any difference, has to take the context into consideration and keep up with the times.

And now, what is the EC? Is it a document or a movement? The importance of EC as a movement rather than a document cannot be highlighted enough. This 9x11, 4-page

document, with its 16 principles has a lot to contribute though not as a document per se. It needs to be transformed so that it does not stay in the four pages but lived out! It needs to be a social movement, and we heard many ways that is happening or could happen. To use theological vocabulary, the Earth Charter needs to be *usus passionis*. It is not something I put on a calendar to do on certain days, but something that we passionately apply and practice on a daily basis. For example, Principle 9a reads: “*Guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required*”. But do all nations have access to clean water or air? African nations, including Ethiopia, Eritrea,



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

Somalia, Uganda, and Angola come to mind. Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are places where food security is becoming a myth. Take Palestine – Israel... are there any vestiges of shelter or safety? The point is that these principles cannot simply stay in the document. From being a document, it needs to be a movement! It has to be lived out and it can be!

And finally, Severn Cullis-Suzuki in her talk mentioned the wildfires that are raging in Canada, and these wildfires are not just in Canada they are raging across planet earth both literally and metaphorically. The loss of biodiversity because of climate change has been significant and if the current trends in biodiversity loss continue, one million animal and plant species will be threatened with extinction – more than at any other point in human history.

So, on the one hand we have fire that destroys. But is there fire that can not destroy; Fire that can bring about life! Yes, there are fires that can breathe life. The fire of life and renewal in Egyptian wisdom; The fire of love in Quranic chants; The fire of letting go or Sabbam adittam in the Buddhist tradition and the fire of forgiveness and healing. So, here, now, I challenge everyone here to see the Earth Charter as another fire, a very different kind of fire that ignites in us the flame of doing justice. The fire that breathes fire into us to do justice...


so that there is still air to breathe and taste for the children just born and will be born; so that there are still trees for the children to climb and play.

Let us pause for a minute here and ask – what is fire, wild or otherwise?

In my faith tradition, fires are epiphanic spaces. They are privileged places where the divine chose to reveal whether it is the burning bush or the wildfires. In other words, they are places of *Parousia* or presence, spaces where the divine is made manifest in the messiness of the world, in the wildfires, in the polluted air and water, amidst the bleached corals and the dying peary Caribous.

The wildfires are a desperate call to us to act. So, fire is at the same time a prognosis and a promise. Prognosis of state we are in and a promise that we are not alone. But that does not mean that we sit back and watch the fires but instead it calls us to be a tinderbox, so to speak.

In some cultures, fire is a sentient being. In others fire is a conduit for communication as well as a communicator and I think this is an important understanding to consider. Communication happens through language and language comprises of words, fragments, lines, blanks, lapses, and silences – the black fire and white fire.



**“Green fire is about
consciousness turning
into action in response to
the groaning of creation.”**

Mary (Joy) Philip

The late Rabbi Schaalman who was faculty at one of the Divinity schools in the USA taught me that Torah, the Jewish sacred text, comprises of black fire and white fire. Black fire are the actual letters written on the scroll and white fire is the space in between or the in-between spaces. Both together constitute the Torah. The black fire represents the literal meaning of the text. The white fire represents ideas beyond the literal meaning and refers to the ideas that we bring to the text and interact with it or interpretations.

This is where cognitive dissonance happens, this is where we ask questions. The written letters and words are fixed and limited; whereas the spaces in between is a realm of limitlessness, ever changing and ever growing, where there is the possibility of newness, of life, of justice! I am not sure whether there are more blank spaces (white fire) than the letters (black fire), but I know that for every black fire there is a white fire pointing to its importance. We have a multitude of living texts with black fire and white fire in front of us – the living text of wildfires, of rising sea levels, of bleaching corals, of melting glaciers, of endangered species of plants and animals. The black fire in these texts could not be clearer – temperatures are rising, forests are burning, corals are bleaching, species are becoming extinct.



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

What about the white fire? Are we paying attention to the white fire where we are called to interpret and make meaning so that we can bring about justice? This is where the Earth Charter can play a very important role.

The Earth Charter is a [green fire](#)! Green fire is a way of thinking and acting ecologically about our proper relationship with the land that includes the soil, waters, plants, animals and people according each mutual respect and honour. Green fire is about consciousness turning into action in response to the groaning of creation. Green fire is fueled by eco-consciousness and spirituality. It ignites a network of relationships, and spreads webs of connectivity, of interconnectedness and interdependence. The Earth Charter as a living text, a movement, it is green fire!

As we are celebrating 25 years of the Earth Charter, let's take a moment and pause. We are where it all started, at The Hague. What does it mean to go to the origins? In 2025, are we the same as we were in 2000? Are our experiences the same? In the 25 years, we have journeyed to different places, and we have been changed by the journeys we have taken. The world is not the same; how can we be? We went through a pandemic for crying out loud! An oft repeated phrase during the pandemic was – when can we go back to normal? The

thing is there is no going back. Sonja Renee Taylor said the following *“We will not go back to normal. never was. Our pre-corona existence was never normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature”.* (Taylor, 2020)

How true is that! We are not in 2000. Things cannot be the way they were in 2000. In 2025, at this ECI event, we are here as different people Our stories have been re-imagined; our visions have been re-envisioned, and we cannot but see with new eyes and experience anew what is out there in the world. In 2025 we are called to act on what matters, what should be searched and stopped, re-imagined, re-built, re-storied, translated and transformed. We are called to stitch a new garment, the raw material for which we already have – the Earth Charter. We just need to update the weaving and see it as a living text so that it breathes life into the white fire and becomes green fires of justice!

Thank you!

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Educating for Cultures of Sustainability



Jacobus Bracker

Jacobus Bracker is heading the section for culture, education for sustainable development and student affairs at the German Rectors' Conference where he is also leading the project "EmpowerESD: Education and sustainability coaching for university transformation". Moreover, he has a rich teaching experience in ESD and environmental humanities from his work at the University of Hamburg and the Hamburg University of Technology.

Ice-age stalled

After 4.5 billion years of Earth's history humans sum up to a population of 8.3 billion people having become a major geological force. Its carbon dioxide emissions and the consequential warming of Earth have most likely stalled the next glacial as suggested by several climate researchers. (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, 2026) Are you ready for this? Do you feel like a geologic force?

Early Ecocriticism, 350 BCE

Around the middle of the 4th century BCE, the Greek philosopher Plato wrote the dialogue Critias, in which the characters engage in a fictional conversation on political and social failings. Critias laments a decline in the fertility of the Attic land and its biodiversity, caused by deforestation, resulting soil erosion and the inability of the remaining soil to absorb rainwater. (Plato, Critias, 111a–d; Harris, 2011)

Even if causal relationships are not explained clearly in the text, the ancient observer was certainly aware that widespread deforestation had consequences for people. Today, we know that deforestation of the Attic forests and islands for fleet construction during the Persian Wars and for expanding agriculture led to a long-term lowering of groundwater levels. You still experience its effects in Greece today, when asked to use water sparingly during your vacation.

The weather of 1911 CE

In 1896, Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius predicted global warming caused by anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions. (Arrhenius, 1896) In a mining journal from 1912, a brief note implying this theory describes the geophysical link between rising atmospheric carbon dioxide and global warming with striking simplicity and clarity. (Braidwood Dispatch and Mining Journal, 1912) The extreme weather of 1911 had sparked discussions:

"The year 1911 will long be remembered for the violence of its weather. The spring opened mild and delightful, but in June a torrid wave of unparalleled severity swept over the country. The cities baked and gasped for breath, while the burning sun and hot winds withered the corn and cost the farmers a million dollars a day." (Molena, 1912)

Do you remember?

The Keeling Curve

A look at the Keeling Curve over the past 10,000 years shows the exponential rise in atmospheric carbon dioxide since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution [1]. The link between this rise and global warming, including its dramatic social and economic consequences, has long been proven and is undisputed – in a non-alternative facts world at least.

We have questions: Why this knowledge, which has been scientifically sound for decades, has not already led to different climate policies? Has science communication failed? Are the counter-narratives of the fossil industries really that powerful? And also: Why higher education institutions have not yet integrated Education for Sustainable Development into all curricula as the education concept of the future? Why are we even seeing backlashes in a changing political climate? – As if there could be universities on a dead planet?

And philosophically speaking: What are the enabling conditions for the great transformation, for this fundamental paradigm shift towards ecocultural civilizations?

Concepts for Cultures of Sustainability

The Earth Charter, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (UN



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems

SDGs) and other documents like the recent Pact for the Future or the Mondiacult Declaration of 2022 emphasize the importance of culture for sustainability transformations. But how is this supposed to work? Discussions demanding cultures of sustainability, are regularly going nowhere. The fundamental transformative power of culture for sustainability practices is missed because concepts of culture are usually not discussed. From a cultural studies background then the question arises how we are supposed to transform cultures if we do not have a clear understanding of concepts?

So, what is culture? And what is a culture of sustainability?

My favorite concept of culture was offered by Clifford Geertz:

“The concept of culture I espouse, [...], is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, [...], that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, [...].” (Geertz, 1973) [2]

This semiotic, or sign-based, concept understands culture as a **fabric of meanings**—such as knowledge and **values**—spun by humans. You could also speak of mindsets.

In a later publication, Geertz clarifies the advantage of his definition: By reducing culture to a web of meanings—what we carry in our minds—and excluding the resulting cultural and social practices, culture becomes more clearly describable. (Geertz, 2000) The observable practices then reflect the underlying cultural web and value conflicts. If I observe that recycling containers are provided at a university, but plastic packaging is found in the paper bin, it becomes evident from these practices that a culture of sustainability may be strategically desired and perhaps supported by leadership—but is not yet embedded in everyone’s mind.

Cultures are transformed through communication. Education is a particularly important and specific communication process in this context. Speaking of educating instead of education may better reflect this. Educating culturalizes all involved parties mutually. The media-centered communication model by Lars Elleström explains how webs of meaning are transferred, negotiated, transformed, and dynamized. Educating culturalizes (all involved parties mutually). This media-centered communication model by Lars Elleström illustrates how webs of meaning are transferred, negotiated, transformed, and dynamized. (See Elleström, 2018)

Basically, communication is the sharing of meanings through signs

materialized in media. To share meanings [3] make them perceptible, they must be materialized—expressed as signs in a medium. You write an email using digital tools; I make my thoughts perceptible to you by vibrating air through my vocal apparatus. Climate scientists write papers politicians could read.

Communication is everything when it comes to transforming cultures.

It follows that cultures of sustainability—also eco-cultures—are webs of meaning significantly configured from sustainability-relevant meanings. Reference frameworks include the meanings and values of the 17 UN SDGs and the 16 principles of the Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter, with its 16 principles grounded in respect for life, ecological integrity, social justice, democracy, and peace, offers a holistic value framework for interpreting and reweaving the cognitive imports that make up cultures of sustainability. When used alongside the UN SDGs, the Earth Charter can ground ESD and Global Citizenship Education in a coherent ethical orientation.

[Narratives and Storytelling in the Construction of Eco-Cultures](#)

Following cultural theorists such as Wolfgang Müller-Funk and Ansgar Nünning, (Müller-Funk 2008, 13; Nünning – Nünning 2002, 1) cultures

can be understood as fundamentally narrative in nature. They emerge from and are sustained by the stories societies tell about themselves, others, and the world. Narratives are not secondary representations—they are constitutive frameworks through which meaning, identity, and agency are shaped. In this view, cultures are structured by narrative patterns, metaphors, and plots that define what is considered normal, possible, and desirable.

This perspective opens a powerful avenue for the construction of eco-cultures through education: the integration of storytelling-based methods. If culture is narrative, then the cultural transformation toward sustainability necessarily involves narrative transformation.

In educational practice, storytelling allows learners to engage cognitively and emotionally with alternative ways of knowing and being. By analyzing, interpreting, or creating stories—whether traditional myths, indigenous knowledge, cli-fi, speculative fiction, or personal experiences—students access webs of meaning that challenge anthropocentric worldviews and open space for ecological thinking.

Such approaches can reveal the deep narrative structures of extractivism and unlimited growth – “values” which are usually not transparent and part of the so-called hidden curriculum –, while also enabling the development

of counter-narratives grounded in interdependence, responsibility, and care. Through storytelling, learners do not just understand sustainability—they imagine and embody it.

Visual Storytelling with Cultural Heritage

Visual storytelling adds another perceptual dimension with potentially deeper impact. Thinking of Grian Cutanda’s work (The cultural seeds of the Earth Storytelling Project) what also is needed is an atlas of transformative images based on Aby Warburg’s concept of the Mnemosyne Atlas [4]



Photo Credit: Mirjam Lems



“If culture begins in the stories we tell, then education must become the storytelling of our shared futures.”

Jacobus Bracker

However, also cultural heritage often laden with imagery can become a valuable ecocultural archive which can be used in ESD. (Bracker and Land, 2026)

In 438 BCE the Parthenon, was dedicated to the patron of Athens, the goddess Athena, placed high above the city on that large rock, the Acropolis.

What a geomorphic gesture dragging all the marble and sandstone from kilometres away up that rock! Already practicing anthropocenic superpowers.

One pediment shows the competition between Athena and Poseidon on the sovereignty for Athens and Attica. As Athena let an olive tree grow and might hint to a concept of the human-environment relation characterized by human supremacy and the availability of nature to human needs. Some decades later Plato complained on the deforestation of Attica.

David Abram asserts that it seems as if the conceptual separation between (human) culture and nature, the reduction of animals, plants, earth to an object, prevalent in “western” or “modern” societies, is a story of a perceptual shift or, even more, loss of the capacity to perceive the natural environment. (Abram, 1996) – And it begins here in ancient Greece. Now we may begin to grasp that we are dealing with the transformation of

deep-rooted cultural patterns millenia old. That makes the paradigm shift so hard.

Envisioning Futures of Education

As we look ahead, the challenge is not merely to integrate sustainability content into curricula, but to transform the DNA of education itself. This means creating learning spaces that are participatory, value-driven, and grounded in the lived realities of both human and non-human communities. And it means cultivating imagination—through storytelling, art, and intercultural dialogue—as a tool for navigating complexity and shaping plural, regenerative futures.

In this vision, the synergies between ESD and the Earth Charter are not theoretical but transformative. They offer orientation—toward meaning, toward responsibility, and toward planetary ethics.

If culture begins in the stories we tell, then education must become the storytelling of our shared futures. Let us teach not only what the world is, but what it could be—and what it must become.

Notes:

[1]Current and historical data are available at the Scripps Institution's of Oceanography (UC San Diego) website: < <https://keelingcurve.ucsd.edu/> > (8 April 2026)

[2] Following more-than-human approaches, these webs are not necessarily spun by humans only, cf. Cobley 2010, 225; D. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous. Perception and Language in a More- Than-Human World* (New York 1996) IX.

[3]Elleström calls them cognitive imports with 'import' in the sense of importance and not in contrast to export

[4]See Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Aby Warburg: Bilderatlas Mnemosyne <https://archiv.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2020/aby_warburg/bilderatlas_mnemosyne_s_tart.php> (8 April 2026).

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ACTION BEYOND HOPE



Peter Blaze Corcoran

Dr. Peter Blaze Corcoran is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Studies and Environmental Education at Florida Gulf Coast University. He has been a faculty member at College of the Atlantic, Swarthmore College, and Bates College in the United States. He has held appointments as a visiting professor at universities in Australia, The Netherlands, Fiji, Malaysia, and Kenya. Currently, he serves as Adjunct Professor of Environmental and Sustainability Education at University of the Sunshine Coast in Queensland, Australia and as Senior Advisor for Faith and Ecology to Unity Earth in Melbourne, Australia. In 2024, he received the Thomas Berry Award for his research on Earth Charter ethics.

The launch of the Earth Charter in The Hague a quarter century ago creates vivid, living memories of a time of promise and efficacy in moving toward a just, humane, sustainable, and peaceful world. Great leaders of that generation gathered in hope and to plan for action. For me, it has been a joyous Earth Charter journey of inspiration and intergenerational collaboration. Yet I know that for many, hope is on a very distant horizon or, even, impossible to imagine. I know that for many young people the world is beyond hope and action. I also know that without hope, without efficacy, without inspiration, without intergenerational solidarity, it is difficult to act on our concerns or on our fears and grief for Earth.

As we mark this momentous anniversary, we find ourselves in deepening psychological, social, economic, political, ecological, and ethical crises. As an American, I am especially despairing of the suffering my country is perpetuating on the world. The United States of America has lost its way – and its soul of democracy. The world is diminished by the loss of American global leadership. So, how might we envision hope and action through ecological and ethical literacy in such a time?

Allow me to reassert the critical importance of education in dark times, and allow me to valorise the power of education to illuminate the way forward. Allow me to lift up the educational value of the Earth Charter

in moving toward the literacy necessary to understand and respond to our civilizational crises. I laud Earth Charter International for prioritizing education through these many years. Education is the way we hold positive values and transmit them to future generations. It is the vessel that holds the indigenous wisdom, the interfaith spirituality, and the aspirations of the Earth Charter for a better world.

Now, what can I say to you that I haven't said or written to the Earth Charter community over this last generation?! Some of you have used my book *The Earth Charter in Action: Toward A Sustainable World* written with Alide Roerink and Mirian Vilela and other scholarly work over the last twenty-five years. My calls for urgency, for prophetic imagination, and for radical hope have been heard and acknowledged – and I am grateful. I struggle to find new words for our current challenges, what is more urgent than urgent? What kind of hope is more radical than radical hope? What is more critical than a civilizational crisis? I am having a linguistic emergency in finding words to fit the current catastrophe.

The classic question in education that must always be answered is, "What does it mean to be an educated person?". It is the central challenge of educational philosophy – and has definitive implications for how a society evolves. The answer, of course, is contextual. It is quite different in the

Australian Aboriginal dreamtime than it is in complex postmodern European Dutch culture, for example. Yet, the answer is always to develop whole persons capable of the imagination, intellect, emotion, and skills to care for the world.

How do we define ecological and ethical literacy twenty-five years into the 21st century? And how might the Earth Charter inform what it means to be an educated person at this time? To be educated now is to be ecologically and ethically literate. It is a *sine qua non* of an educated person. The Earth Charter is, as we have said from the beginning of the journey, of great educational value in defining this literacy. This value endures! The Earth Charter remains a rich source of content. The work we have done in philosophy of Earth Charter education promises that it is also a rich source of process.

Lately, I have found it helpful to look closely at the language and spirit of the document. In the Preface to "The Earth Charter in Action: Toward A Sustainable World," Earth Charter Commissioner Wangari Maathai wrote:

Many have reflected on words and principles in the Earth Charter so that they could be moved to action of many kinds. I encourage you to do the same – to find the words in the Earth Charter that speak to you and to give them meaning by reflecting on them... In my own life, I love to do this because I can talk, I can reflect, and at the end, I can go home, dig a hole, and plant a tree. (Maathai, 2005, p.13)

At this point, as we reflect on this quote, I would like to invite you listeners to engage with an aspect of the Earth Charter text and to look at it anew.

In the exercise you might use the Earth Charter text of your native language, such as the exciting new Irish translation. Then select a part, a principle, a subprinciple, a phrase, or an embedded concept.

I invite you to hold the words and take them up into your hearts.

Imagine how those words would be a part of the ecological and ethical literacy you believe is important at this time.

Who would be your audience? Citizens? Policy makers? Children?

What would you want the learner to understand? and How could you go about educating for that idea?

My intention with this exercise is to demonstrate the educational power of the Earth Charter to inspire and guide ecological and ethical literacy.

At the conference, I was asked to speak in a section of the program on "Hope and Action Through Ecological and Ethical Literacy." It seems to me that each of us has an individual answer to the question of how to strengthen the Earth Charter as a vision of hope and a guide to action.

Allow me to share some of the ideas, inspired by the Earth Charter, that I have been working with as of late. I

“...sometimes the most important doing can simply be being. Being and living one’s own ecological and ethical literacy is a form of action.”

Peter Blaze Corcoran

offer these with the aim that they might demonstrate how the Earth Charter can speak to our individual aspirations as educated people.

First, inspired by Wangari Maathai, I have applied the practice of *lectio divina* to reading the Earth Charter.

This is a contemplative reading to discover meanings at a deeper level. It is known as a Christian practice used by Saint Augustine and others but many faith traditions advocate meditative reading of sacred texts to allow deeper significance to emerge.

Second, the notion that “Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe” has helped me lately. It gives me a perspective on our worldly crises. Further, it, and the cosmological context of the Preamble, inspire wonder. Wonder is a topic of my primary research and I find it powerful and positive and generative of hope, possibility, and inspiration for action.

Third, as many struggle with what action to take, I have realized that sometimes the most important thing can simply be being. Being and living one’s own ecological and ethical literacy is a form of action. It is also a way to teach. As the Buddhists say, we teach by who we are. Such action is an important beginning and may lead to action that does not depend upon hope.

And act we must! We must act in keeping with our ecological and ethical literacy whether or not we have hope for creating the world we seek. Only through action can we truly engage the challenges we face. Only through action can we generate change and the possibility of a better future.

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SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT EARTH CHARTER+25



Mateo Alfredo Castillo Ceja: For his unwavering dedication, visionary leadership, and outstanding contribution to our shared mission— to build a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.



Klaus Bosselmann: For his unique and groundbreaking contributions to advancing new thinking and research at the vital intersection of international environmental law, Earth Governance and the Earth Charter.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT EARTH CHARTER+25



Alicia Jiménez : For her dedicated service, visionary leadership, dedication and groundbreaking contributions to the development of the Earth Charter and the ESD School Seal.



Grian A. Cutanda: For his groundbreaking research, work and profound contributions to the Earth Charter global movement through the inspirational vision of the Earth Stories collection project.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS AT EARTH CHARTER+25



Alide Roerink: For her outstanding dedication to the Earth Charter movement for the past two decades.



Celebrating +25 Through the Arts

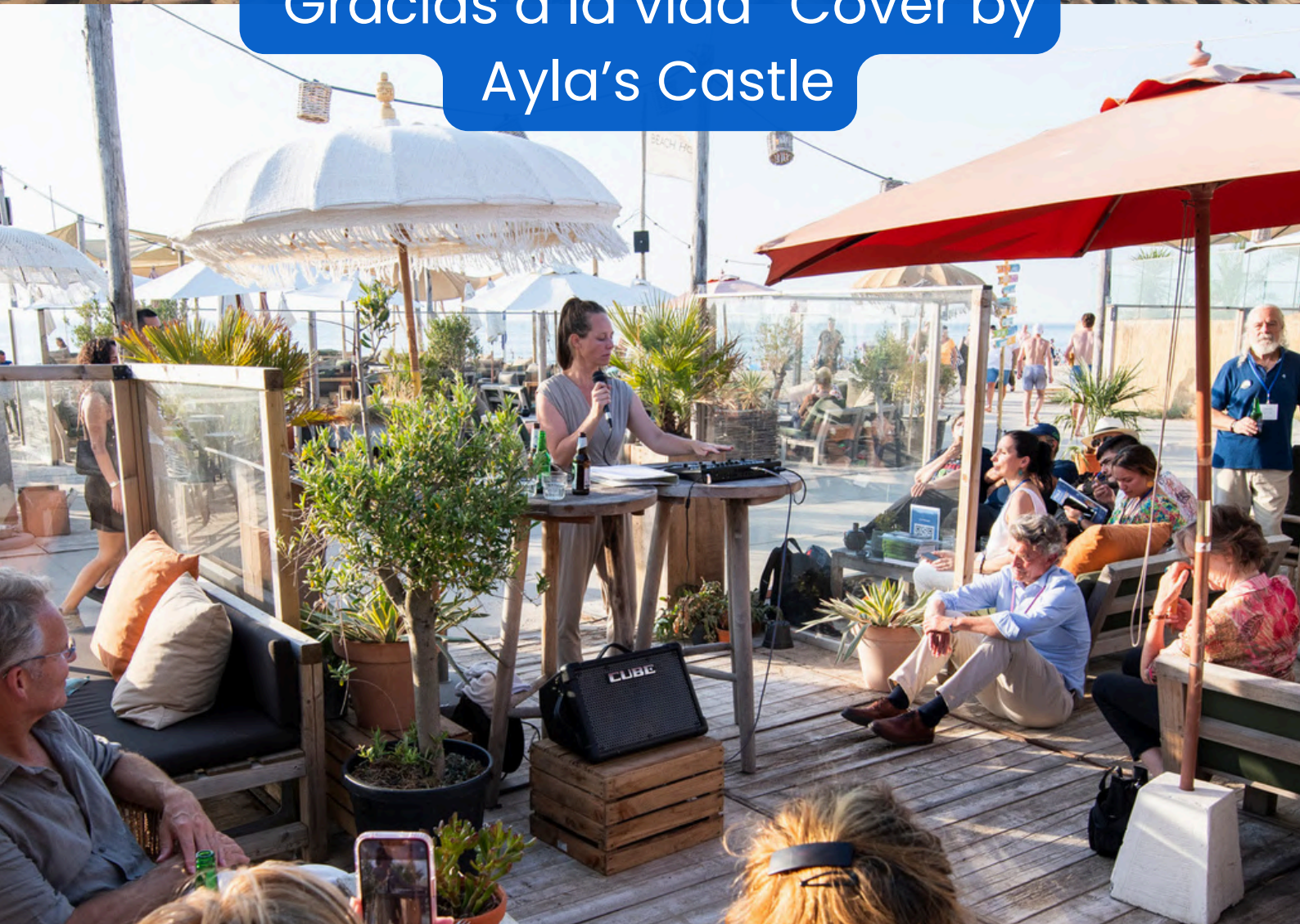




Guernica de la Ecología by Artist
and eco-activist Claudy Jongstra



**"Gracias a la vida" Cover by
Ayla's Castle**





Screening of "Wade in the Water" Film by David Mesfin



“I am because you are” Song by FRE



Musical performance by Loes Ten Den





Musical Performance by Kaster Kwartet





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