

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Miriam Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars, and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education, and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

This is the second part of our conversation with Steven Rockefeller, which is part of our Earth Charter podcast series.

Now, I would like to turn our attention to some key ideas that we can find in the Earth Charter and ask you to share with us the meaning of it and how some ideas or principles evolved through the consultation and drafting process. I remember that there was some discussion during the Earth Charter drafting process on how to refer to our planet Earth, whether it should be with a capital E or whether it should be using the words Mother Earth or whether we should use the term nature and so forth. Can you share with us the background of that?

So at the end of the Real Plus Five Forum, the commission held a news conference and we issued the benchmark draft of the Earth Charter, which was the first fully public draft with the commission's stamp of approval. It was issued as an experimental text. Prior to that, there had been at least 15 different versions of the Charter between January and the end of March when the benchmark draft was issued. That was our first attempt. It was going to be dramatically, dramatically changed and it was. But it got the whole process going.

We got a lot of feedback and we had a reference to Mother Earth in the Earth Charter. At the news conference, some conservative Christian groups emerged and attacked the use of the phrase Mother Earth as paganism and idol worship and so on and so forth. After about six months of negotiation, we decided it just wasn't worth having a battle over Mother Earth. But we did continue to use the name of the planet Earth throughout the drafting process. That's a whole story in itself. We had a very important discussion at the January 1997 meeting about how to talk about the planet.

There were really three options. The Earth with a small E, which is the way it is used in the Stockholm Declaration and the World Charter for Nature. Or the Earth with a capital E or Earth, just the name Earth. At the meeting in 1997 was Professor Eric Chazon from Tufts University and Harvard University who was an astrophysicist. He said, look, when scientists talk about the planet, they use the name Earth. When they talk about the Earth with a small E, they're referring to dirt. You ought to use the name of the planet.

It doesn't make any sense to talk about the Earth any more than it makes sense to talk about the Mars or the Jupiter or the Pluto. Earth is a name and you should use it. At that meeting, the indigenous people present said, yes, you should use the name Earth and also use Mother Earth, but at least use the name Earth. I also thought about this and I thought to myself, you know, if you use the Earth with a small E, it encourages you to think in an anthropocentric way about the planet, that it's there as a stage for human history and as a collection of resources for human beings to exploit.

If you use the name of the planet, Earth, it evokes in your imagination the photograph of the Earth taken by the astronauts, which gives you a sense that this is this beautiful spaceship home of the human family that needs to be treasured, protected and respected. And so that making this change in language was very important because it's just like the shift in using general neutral language. Instead of using men as a collective term for all human beings, you use general neutral language, talk about humanity or whatever.

The shift also causes you to change your perception of the world around you. So, you know, it is very interesting because still many, many groups use the Earth with

a capital E. They don't get rid of the definite article. And if you look at the Rio Declaration, they use the Earth with a capital E. Now that was a step up from the Earth with a small E in the World Charter for Nature. The other interesting thing about language, and you had asked me this question earlier, what caused the shift from nature to Earth? When in 1948, IUCN called for a World Charter for the Protection of Nature. Then they drafted a World Charter for Nature in 1982. But by the time you get to the Rio Earth Summit, we're talking about an Earth Summit and an Earth Charter.

What caused that change from talking about nature to talking about Earth? And I think the answer is that during the 1980s, scientists like James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis began to think more clearly that the biosphere was one unified, interconnected

hole, and that Earth was the name for this great global ecosystem of which we're all apart. And the critical thing was to think holistically about the planet and about environmental protection. And so people instead of just talking about nature in some very general way began to focus down on Earth. So the World Charter for Nature's first principle is respect nature. The Earth Charter's first principle is respect Earth and life and all its diversity.

So there's a story and reason behind each word in preschool.

And I'll tell you another just to give you an example of the way language was developed.

Why in the first principle is diversity there? And a life and all its diversity? Well, one obvious reason is that life, of course, is very diverse in many different species and so forth. But how did that wording get there? And that is from the International Women's Movement. And individuals like Wangari Matai

emphasized the importance of cultural diversity and diversity in general. Diverse lifestyle, sexual orientations, all those kind of things. And the International Women's Movement was pressing to have some reference to diversity in those first four principles that are a

brief summary of the big overview. First four principles of the Earth Charter. Some reference to diversity. And I was struggling just in terms of the poetry, of the language and everything. How to do this? And then it just struck me. You know, that it wasn't the

place in the first four principles to start talking about diversity in some broad cultural sense.

But maybe you could talk about life and all its diversity and bring diversity in the very first principle of the Earth Charter. And the International Women's Representatives, very pleased. It's right there in the first principle. And establishes that notion which then gets translated down into lots of other issues. For example, when we came to drafting the principles on gender equality, there was a discussion about how to refer to family.

Was there one concept of a family? Or many concepts? And so of course the Women's Movement said you've got to refer to families. You can't say, you know, protect the, you know, promote the welfare of the family as if there's one concept of a family. The welfare of families. So there were subtle things like that, but that all flows from the recognition of the importance of diversity. And of course the Earth Charter highlights cultural diversity in a number of different places. So that was just an example, you know, as you have a very important concept and principle around the idea of diversity. And where do you bring it into the Charter? How do you articulate it? And I think it was actually very important that that first principle contained it. So respect Earth, not just respect nature. We use the phrase respect Earth in the preamble. Because I mean respect nature, respect for nature. Because that's an important, you know, way of articulating that. But the principle, we focus down on Earth. And with the capital A.

Many people who were part of the drafting and consultation process of the Earth Charter remember discussing or a number of exchanges on the importance of the concept of compassion and how we humans ought to relate to animals in the large living world. The key question was how to articulate that in the Earth Charter, how to articulate that concept of compassion in the Earth Charter. Could you share with us the background of that?

It's important to keep in mind there are sort of two ways of talking about relations with nature. You can talk about relations with species, which is what the World Charter for Nature does, what it says all life forms have in here in value. And then you can talk about relations with individual living beings, living animals and plants, individuals. And the

second principle of the Earth Charter, the way it's currently worded, talks about care for the community of life. Very broad, very general statement. And it doesn't make any specific reference to individual living beings. But we needed a principle in the Charter that didn't just refer in a very general way to the whole community of life or to species, but referred to how you treat individual living beings. And this is principle 15. And the first wording of this was treat all living beings with compassion. And it's important to know we use the word living beings. We don't use the word creature. And why didn't we use creature? Because creature

refers to a creator. And there are people like Buddhists and atheists who don't believe in a creator. Now we had a lot of Christian theologians, Muslims and Jewish theologians who came to us and said, we want you to make some reference to the creator. You have to make a reference to the creator. Say we can't make a reference to the creator because

not everybody believes in a creator. And therefore we didn't want to use the word creature because some people don't use that language. But living beings is words that is a phrase used by Buddhists, used widely in Asia.

Everybody in the West knows what a living being is. So anyway, the principle instead of saying, treat all creatures, treat all living beings with compassion. And the Inuit Circumpolar Conference from Greenland came forward and said that we can't accept that language. You cannot hunt with compassion. And this opened up a huge debate because the Buddhists and the Hindus, the animal rights people all wanted treat all living beings with compassion. And here were the Inuit Circumpolar Conference coming forward. And one member of that group was on the Earth Charter Commission, Henrietta Rasmussen. And she was working with Finn Linga, who was closely connected to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, saying you couldn't hunt with compassion. And the prime example that the Inuit gave, and first you have to recognize,

the Inuit live in the far North where there is no agriculture. So they're totally dependent on hunting for survival. And the prime example the Inuit gave to all of us is killing a whale.

You know, one of the Inuit chieftains who came to one of our meetings said, Mr. Rockefeller, do you ever kill a whale? And I said, no, I have not. And he said, you cannot. He said, it's a terrible process. You cannot kill a whale with compassion. It's a terrible process. And so we were in a real dilemma because there was passionate feeling on the part of Buddhist groups and animal rights groups to have this principle on compassion. And this dialogue went on for two years. And there was a big network in Russia, the Russian Association of Indigenous People of the North. They all backed the Inuit. And there were other tribal groups who supported the Inuit. But there were other hunting groups in North American Indian groups and some South American Indian groups who said, you can hunt with compassion.

With all these different perspectives and interests of groups, how was all of this solved?

The resolution of it finally came when somebody suggested that we move the word compassion from principle 15 to principle 2. Principle 2 is care for the community of life. And the idea was, well, maybe the Inuit would accept care for the community of life as a whole with compassion. And they did. And they said, we have no problem with talking about the community of life in general and being compassionate. And then we also thought to ourselves, you know, in the Brazilian's word system, the Brazilian National Committee, that you include the word love.

And that brings in these values from Christianity and Judaism and Islam and Buddhism and so forth. The principle is love and compassion. And to complete that principle, I thought, you know,

love and compassion are fine, but you also need knowledge, intelligence. So we added the word understanding to create, just care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love. Everybody seemed happy with that. And how to phrase this principle on how you treat individual living beings. And the Inuit said, well,

they were comfortable with respect. I mean, they respected whales. It's okay, treat all living beings with respect. And then Mary Midgeley, who was a philosopher from England, who had a special interest in animal rights and so forth, asked the Inuit if they would accept the word consideration. And they said, okay. So the principle then ended up treating all living beings with respect and consideration. So that took two years to work out. But what was impressive is nobody walked away from the tip. Everybody stayed there and we started it up. And it was a, it was quite a wonderful experience.

Is there any other example of an idea or principle that different groups had a different perspective or different feeling about it, such as the notion of intrinsic value?

Another very good example is that the environmental ethics philosophers in North America and Europe. All use the term intrinsic value when they're talking about respect for other species and life forms and asserting that these species have value quite apart from their utilitarian value for people. However, there are a number of Buddhist philosophers who don't like to talk about the intrinsic value of other beings. And the reason is that they think it suggests the existence of a fixed self, of an essence that is some fixed permanent entity in the self. And they deny the existence in their doctrine of emptiness and no self. So we were faced with a situation where there were two very different opinions on this issue of intrinsic value.

And you know, in American environmental philosophy, intrinsic value of all beings, I mean, this is just boilerplated. When I consulted the Dalai Lama about this, he went to his environmental desk at Darn Sala, and they reviewed it and wrote me back. Dalai Lama wrote me back and said that he and his philosophical advisors said not to use the term intrinsic value. So the question was, how are we going to do this? That we had to do something here. So what I realized was that everybody agreed that all beings are interdependent.

We live in a world in which everything is interrelated with everything else. It's fundamental Buddhist document, doctrine, modern ecology fully embraces it, all the Christian, the Christian, all the Western environmental ethics, people all agree on interdependence. So the fact of interdependence could be elevated as a reason for respect for all living beings.

And then you simply add, all living beings are interdependent and have value quite apart from their utilitarian value for people. You don't have to use the word intrinsic. People accepted that. Now the Western environmental philosophers were not happy, but the basic idea is there. And it was a principle that everybody could support. I mean, the Western environmental philosophers didn't disagree with it. They said, yes, interdependence, everything has value. They just missed the word, the adjective intrinsic. But the Buddhists were all comfortable with it. So I mean, we were able to resolve that. But that took quite a long time to get sorted out.

How about this story behind the term mystery of being used in the Aristotle preamble?

Going back to Mohamed Sanon's vision that the earth charter should have a spiritual vision as well as an ethical vision. I was very concerned about this issue. And Leonardo

Boff, the Brazilian theologian, had joined the earth charter commission. And he wrote me a letter and said he was very unhappy that this reference to the creator had been deleted. He understood the problem. But he said there should be some reference to the ineffable mystery, which is the source of all things. And one of the great moments in the earth charter drafting process was this gathering.

I think it was called Continental Conference of North America, South America, and Central American National Committees for the Earth Charter. It was a continental conference. And there was I think 23 different nations represented. And we gathered in Criabba in the center of the province of a state of Managrosso in Brazil, which is right next to where the Pantanal is, this great sort of geodetic center of the Amazon. And it was an extraordinary meeting. And it lasted a week.

And one night, Leonardo Boff and I got together, I think I'd been there two or three days. And

to talk about this and other issues having to do with the drafting process. And I can still remember sitting out there in this patio with a few lights. He didn't talk, speak English very well. And I certainly didn't know Portuguese, but I had a certain amount of French. So we communicated mostly in French. And we got to this discussion about how to make some reference to what he called the ineffable mystery with a capital M and a capital E. It was the source of all things. And we ended up agreeing that we could include in the earth charter a reference to reverence for the mystery of being. And the feeling was, and I think the whole sentence is that something to the effect that reverence for the mystery of being and humility regarding our place in the larger scheme of things can contribute to this sense of social and ecological responsibility and so forth.

And strengthen it. And so my feeling was that if you talk about reverence for the mystery of being, reverence is a word that I think is very well translated or defined as respect coupled with awe. Reverence is respect coupled with awe. It's a deep and sense of respect. In fact, some people would say that the word reverence also involves a sense of the sacred.

So you use the verb reverence for the mystery of being. Mystery of being can be, if you're an atheist and a humanist, you could say the mystery of being is just the natural mystery of the universe. But we all should be in awe of it because it's truly amazing. But if you're a deeply religious person who believes in God, then the mystery of being is God. So there was language that could be accepted by people with many different perspectives, but that also could be interpreted in ways that would make different groups feel comfortable about the earth charter. So there were, you didn't use the word creator, you didn't use the word God, but there's a reference. So someone who believes in God can say, yes, the earth charter affirms my faith in God or what Leon Artebuff described as the ineffable mystery. So that was, you know, a very, very good resolution of that. I felt that, you know, it's part of what gives the earth charter a unique depth because an intergovernmental document would never get into talking about reverence for the mystery of being.

I mean, governments are not going to use that kind of language, but as a civil society document, the people's treaty, we could. And just like we use these words love, compassion,

and talking about humility and so forth. So there are a lot of references in the earth charter to these spiritual values, which I think give it part of its power and depth. And I think it's very, very important part of the whole picture.

Can you talk about the idea of reference for life that Albert Schweitzer stressed and which is in the earth charter?

Schweitzer did exactly promote the whole notion of reference for life here. And Schweitzer's work, you know, if you go back and read his philosophy of civilization, or his autobiography, where he tells you the story about how he came to the term reference for life, he's a real prophet of what happened at the end of the century. I mean, he wrote all that material in the early 1900s. But he was just before World War I, he saw Europe headed to World War. He saw Western civilization sort of collapsing. And he was one of the first people to see with extraordinary clarity that if human beings didn't make peace with the whole natural world and with all life,

Western civilization was going to was going to crash. And so he came out with this notion that of this principle, that a reference for life, a recognition that all life is sacred. And I actually met Schweizer in Lamborghini when I was about maybe 20 years old. I was on a trip through Africa with my father. And we went to Lamborghini. And I met Albert Schweizer. And you know, I didn't fully know who he was. I mean, he was running this hospital deep in the jungle on the Zambezi River. And he had about 13 nurses working with him, who were from Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands, and so forth, all deeply dedicated at a very simple hospital.

But many of the tribal people that came felt comfortable coming to his hospital, whereas there was a big brick stainless steel hospital down the river, apparently, that unnerved a lot of the tribal people when they would come to Schweizer. And I remember going for a walk with him. He took me down to where he had sort of an isolation ward for people with leprosy. And we left the larger group and he and I walked down together. And again, we were talking French. And all of a sudden, he started talking to Maydown. And I looked around and here was a group of chickens walking next to us following him. And he would periodically make comments to them and talk to them. And we got down and he showed me the leprosy colony. And then we turned and walked back. And the chickens followed him all the way back. And every once in a while, he would say, Maydown, this and that.

And it was a wonderful little moment with Schweizer. And

in time, I came to read what he had written. And I mean, he was a great man. And he abandoned his career in Europe as a professor and a concert organist and doctor to go to bring medicine to the heart of Africa. And he lived, just completely devoted himself to that work. But he also kept writing when he was there and did some of his really important work. And he actually came to this principle of reverence for life. He

described it in his autobiography. He was on a boat going down the Zambezi River. And he'd been concentrated on what was the first principle of ethics. And he was trying to come up. Like we're struggling with the Earth Show, what's the first principle of environmental conservation and sustainable development? He was looking for the first principle of ethics. And he said that as the boat made its way through a herd of hippopotamists in the middle of the river, everybody was alarmed, apparently, on the boat. Schweizer was sitting there with his notepad and pencil. He said it was like an iron door that opened. And all of a sudden flashed before his eyes the concept of reverence for life. And it was sort of like a zen experience where he'd been deeply concentrated on the issue. And then, wham! All of a sudden, you know, the doors opened and he was enlightened. And then he went on to develop that in a very, very powerful way. I mean, you know, for a while I was concerned whether we could use the word reverence in the Earth Charter because it's not a term that a lot of people use very much today. But I became convinced that it has a resonance and a meaning. But it really is important. And it's not just sort of an antique term from the past. I mean, it's a term that, because, you know, respect coupled with awe and a sense of the sacred. And I think that's very, very important. Without a sense of the sacred, I think as a human species, we're in deep trouble. And

so I was very pleased anyway that we could work that out. And again, it was a wonderful experience being able to work with Leonardo Balham.

Another important concept we can find in the Earth Charter is the notion of reproductive health. This is a sensitive issue for some groups that give great importance to this, but also have different perspectives about it. How did that get reflected in the Earth Charter?

The Cairo and Beijing conferences on women, the UN held, all endorsed reproductive rights. And in the benchmark draft, we endorsed reproductive rights. But then, all these objections came from the Islamic leaders, from the Roman Catholic Church, from conservative Protestant groups, all saying the word reproductive has the meaning of an endorsement of abortion, and therefore can't use it. So we went into a long negotiation around this. And again, this is UN sanctioned language coming out of the Beijing consensus.

So this was a really complicated issue. And we even consulted with the Vatican. We got an opinion from a Muslim year at the Vatican. And we consulted many, many, many different groups. And in the end, if I'm right, we wound up talking about ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction. And responsible reproduction is language that was approved by the Roman Catholic Church. And reproductive health is far less complicated, even though a number of the conservative groups at any use of the word reproductive has the connotation of an endorsement of abortion. But our position in the Earth Charter was we didn't take a position on abortion for or against it. And we didn't see any point in admiring the Earth Charter in that debate. The Earth Charter frames the debate. First principle, respect Earth and life and all its diversity. And you have these principles on reproductive health.

And then you can have the debate about abortion and different cultures and communities are going to resolve it in different ways. But there's no international consensus around the issue of abortion. So the commission and the drafting committee really decided we just shouldn't get into that. And it was interesting for me to see when I was reading the report on the recent debates about the sustainable development goals, the same argument is going on as to whether to refer to reproductive rights. The same groups are objecting to it. And you know, the battle is going on. And I think they wound up in the compromise document, not in the main goal, but in the supporting principles, setting up targets and so forth, using the term reproductive rights. But it was taken out of any of the 17 goals.

Steven, how about the principle on peace and on violence, which is in the fourth pillar of the Earth Charter?

If you look at the history of global ethics since World War II, what drove the whole movement initially was the search for peace, to overcome the problems that lead nations and peoples to try to resolve their difficulties with violence. And so the first concern in creating the United Nations was to find a way to promote peace in the world. So peace has just been fundamental to the whole development of human rights in the United Nations and so forth. So when we drafted the Earth Charter, peace was always very much on our minds that, I mean, there's peace with nature, peace among human beings and so forth.

So we were always concerned about peace. And what I learned from my study in the field of theology and social ethics is that if you're going to achieve peace, you need economic and social justice, you need human rights, you need respect for nature, you need to protect nature. Because if you don't deal with those problems, you're never going to have peace because those problems are going to generate conflicts among people. You have mass poverty, certain peoples' human rights are denied, people are suffering under some totalitarian regime that denies them social justice. It's all going to end in violence eventually. And this happens over and over and over again. So we very quickly realized that the principle on peace should come last because you can't have peace if people are not committed to all the other principles in the Earth Charter. So from very early on, we had a peace principle and I believe it was always last. Now the third, the fourth section of the Earth Charter is called democracy, nonviolence and peace. How did nonviolence become an important principle in the Earth Charter? We had a principle at one point that said something about practice peace.

And Kamala Chowdhury from India, who had studied the teachings of Gandhi and was committed to Gandhi's whole approach, said that peace is the goal, nonviolence is the practice. And that was a very important distinction and we all accepted that and realized, okay, the practice of nonviolence then is something the Earth Charter ought to highlight. And of course, nonviolent conflict resolution is fundamental to democracy. I mean, the whole concept of a democratic society is one in which you have freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of communication, which enables people to sort out their problems in a nonviolent way. You have freedom of press.

And so nonviolence isn't just some principle that has been practiced by Gandhi and Martin Luther King and so forth. It's also fundamental to the ethical vision associated with building a democratic society. Democracy is supposed to create a social environment which people can solve their problems without going to war. Right now, of course, civil wars occur and sometimes democracy fails in that sense. But we all realized after Kamala, who was on the Earth Charter Commission, she was one of the co-chairs of the Earth Charter Commission, and Kamala was deeply committed to the drafting process. And on some of the commissioners, like Kamala, Wakaka, Hiranaka, Wangari, Matai, and so forth, they came regularly to the drafting meetings in January and they stayed in dialogue with us. So that was very important to have a number of commissioners.

Of course, Maury Strong and Gorbachev, too, were engaged in the drafting process. But Kamala was especially helpful and a truly wonderful and extraordinary woman. And she helped us sort out all of that. And so we had finally concluded with that fourth section of principles, democracy, non-violence and peace, and then principle 16 is promote a culture of non-violence, tolerance, and peace. And then the supporting principles in principle 16 clarify that. And the very last principle in 16, 16F, is really important because it sets forth the relational spirituality that pervades the whole Earth Charter. And it defines peace as the wholeness that comes from right relationship with oneself, other persons, other life, other cultures, and the larger whole of which we are all apart. And so that last principle sort of completes the spiritual vision as well as the ethical vision in the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter is really about right relationship. And if you can get right relationship right, you know, then you can have peace. If the relationships are not right with yourself, with other people, with other life and ecosystems and so forth, and with the larger universe of which we're all apart, then it's very, very difficult to really establish peace. So the Earth Charter makes the point in the end. But if we want peace, but not only need ethics, we need a spirituality that is keenly focused on right relationship. And part of that right relationship too goes all the way back to the preamble with reverence for the mystery of being.

There is a sentence in the Earth Charter preamble that highlights the idea of one Earth community, one common destiny, and also on we are one human family. Could you comment on that?

That language all has a history to it. Thomas Berry is the one who started using the phrase Earth community now. It may also be found elsewhere. But Thomas Berry really brought that forward and elevated it. However, the phrase one human family and one community of life or one Earth community, during the consultation process around the effort to draft an Earth Charter in 1992 with the Rear Earth Summit, somebody from Canada submitted a proposal that included that language. One human family and one community of life with a common destiny, something like that. Or maybe it was just one human family with a common destiny. And I added one Earth community. But that phrase, one human family, one common destiny, that language was something that again, I got from a submission that came to Murray Strong from a Canadian group.

I can't remember now the man's name. But that's how we got it. I always loved that. Because what it captures is this sense that we are becoming more and more

interdependent. And that what I do affects you, what you do affects me, wherever we are in the world. And we need to think about ourselves as part of one big human family, not fragmented into separate religions and races and nations and so forth. And that human rights values, human rights law is an attempt to build this sense that we all share a common nature, we all share a common dignity, and we all have equal rights.

So this is just basic to building our global community. And then one Earth community that links the human with the greater community of life. And this is what the Earth Charter is trying to do all along, is the second principle, care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love. It's absolutely critical that we have this, we break down the dualism between human beings and other life on planet Earth. This is just fundamental. And the biggest problem in the way we think about the natural world and the greater community of life is we tend to think about it as a collection of resources that exist to support us and that we are free to exploit it in any way we want. And we look at the rest of the world as just a collection of objects, a dualism between human beings and nature. You could say culture and nature. And we develop this sense of all being interdependent members of the greater community of life.

And again this goes back to what I was saying earlier is that people have a tendency, particularly in the last 300 years, during the period of industrialization and the development of modern civilization, to think about nature as just a stage for human history and a collection of resources for human beings to use and exploit for their own purposes. And unless we can change that attitude and begin to develop a new sense of respect for other species and Earth's ecosystems, we're not really going to be able to change the behavior of modern civilization so as to protect and restore Earth's ecological integrity. That's just fundamental. And to emphasize we have one common destiny is to make the point that what happens to each other and what happens to nature is also going to happen to all of us. And you can no longer think that we can trash the planet and get away with this and survive. That if we continue to degrade Earth's ecological systems, what we're doing is undermining the capacity of the Earth to sustain life. And the end result will be the collapse of human civilization.

And I don't think the universe is going to weep for us if we behave like that and destroy this planet. And we will return to stardust where we came from. So I think those words in the first paragraph of the preamble are very, very important to meditate on one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. I mean, this is we really need to let that sink deep into our psyche and change our attitude and the way we understand and think about ourselves.

My last question is what would be your vision for the future of the Earth's Chatter movement? I mean, what is your hope in your wish for the Earth's Chatter movement to become in the future?

My hope would be that the values of the Earth's Chatter increasingly become accepted as basic human values by people and that this vision of all human beings and all communities and societies have responsibility for the human family as a whole, for the greater community of life, and future generations becomes accepted as just sort of fundamental ethical values and is integrated into the larger

consciousness of society. I mean, that's the real goal and that the Earth's Chatter itself, the document, becomes an instrument that is used when it's helpful in educational settling settings as a resource for inspiration, as a guide for people searching for direction regarding business, regarding civil society, and government. I don't think that the Earth's Chatter necessarily has to be endorsed and adopted by governments and so forth, but if it is, that's wonderful. And the real goal here is that people fully internalize that vision of one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny and realize that we are interdependent members of the greater community of life. And with that goes the respect for nature along with love and compassion in our human relationships.

Thank you so much Steven for sharing this time with us.

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