



EARTH CHARTER: THE MOST MODERN DOCUMENT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The mission of the Earth Charter initiative:

To promote the transition to sustainable ways of living and a global society founded on a shared ethical framework that includes:

- respect and care for the community of life,
- ecological integrity,
- universal human rights,
- respect for diversity,
- economic justice,
- democracy, and
- a culture of peace

History of the Earth Charter – Main milestones

- **1972** – The Club of Rome issued the Report „*Limits to Growth*“
- **1987** – The World Commission on Environment and Development launched „*Our Common Future Report*“ with a call for a „new charter“ to set new norms to guide the transition to sustainable development
- **1992** – Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro
- **1994** – Maurice Strong (SG of the Rio Summit) and Mikhail Gorbachov acting through organisations he founded (Earth Council and Green Cross) (supported by NL Govt) developed Earth Charter as a civil society initiative
- **1997** – at the Rio+5 Forum, *1st Benchmark Draft of the Earth Charter* is released as a „document in progress“ leading to international consultations
- March 2000 – the Earth Charter Commission came to consensus on the Earth Charter at a meeting held at UNESCO HQ in Paris
- **June 29, 2000 – The Earth Charter is inaugurated in ceremonies at The Peace Palace in The Hague** ---->
- Efforts to have the Earth Charter formally recognised at the World Summit in Johannesburg (2002)
- Over following years, thousands of endorsements representing millions of people including numerous associations and institutions (like UNESCO), support from heads of states etc.



Den Haag, Vredespaleis

Briefly on the contents of the Earth Charter

(Preamble, 4 Chapters, 16 Articles, 61 paras)

Preamble

- Earth, Our Home
- The Global Situation
- The Challenges Ahead
- Universal Responsibility

I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life
6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights and community well-being
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open change and wide application of the knowledge acquired

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative
10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner
11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisite to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunities
- 12 Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities

IV. DEMOCRACY, NON-VIOLENCE, AND PEACE

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice
14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life
15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration
16. Promote a cultural tolerance, nonviolence, and peace

The Way Forward

Instead of conclusions

- The Earth Charter is nothing like an international treaty but merely a „soft“ global legal document of the worldwide civil society - similarly like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - but it is more far-reaching. It actually addresses that what is called „the human ecology“
- As such it has been accepted by UNO, IGOs, NGOs and representations of a couple of countries
- It contains **new valuable formulations of challenges of sustainable development** on global scale for present and future generations
- It possesses a remarkable approach for the implementation:
„ IT STARTS WITH ONE “ This means: „start at yourself !
- It is worth to be endorsed by our institutions and concerned individuals
- **For its intellectual and moral values, it should be disseminated and actively utilised in education as well as in societal activities by our academic communities, *inter alia* in influencing decision-makers**

Thank you for your attention !

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