

The Earth Charter Initiative

# EARTH CHARTER YOUTH TOOLKIT

Resources and Activities for the Development of Youth Activism



Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life

*The Earth Charter*

The Earth Charter Initiative

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# EARTH CHARTER YOUTH TOOLKIT

Resources and Activities for the Development of Youth Activism



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## I. Establishing an Earth Charter Youth Group (ECYG)

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**Y**oung people interested in the values and principles of the Earth Charter are strongly encouraged to form, or join, a local Earth Charter Youth Group (ECYG) to disseminate and implement the Earth Charter in their respective regions. ECYGs are also encouraged to collaborate with one another, as well as with other organizations. When several ECYGs exist in one country, it is suggested to form a non-hierarchical, countrywide network and develop a common idea of how to bring alive the vision of the Earth Charter in your country and/or region. Reaching across national borders to form regional networks is also appropriate, especially when such regions share common challenges or encompass shared ecosystems such as a river basin, mountain range, forest, desert, island, etc.



### Who can create an ECYG?

**ECYGs can be created in all kinds of settings**, including schools, universities, associations, neighborhoods and places of worship so long as people want to work together based on the values embedded in the Earth Charter.

All kinds of **existing groups**, clubs, associations and youth NGOs that share the ethical vision of the Earth Charter are invited to join the global network of the Earth Charter youth network. We encourage groups to be inclusive and to strive to be gender balanced and to include representatives from various local ethnic, religious, and socio-economic groups.



### What do you have to do to create an ECYG?

- **Find a group of interested people** or introduce the Earth Charter into an existing organization.
- **Review the Earth Charter carefully**, and think about how you might apply it locally.
- **Define concrete results** you want to achieve and actions to get there.



### What steps need to be taken in order to be recognized as an ECYG?

1. **Identify a contact person** for your ECYG. This person is usually the Coordinator for the Youth Group as well.
2. **Fill out the ECYG Application** on the ECYG webpage. The application is available [here](#).
3. **Read and endorse the Earth Charter**, and ask all of your members to endorse it as well. Go [here](#) and click “Endorse the Charter.”

When you endorse the Earth Charter **remember to check the box**: “Add me to the youth network to receive updates on youth activities” in order to be included in the youth network.

4. Each ECYG is asked to submit thorough documentation of its activities 1-2 times each calendar year to the ECYG Wikispace page. Documentation of your Youth Group's successes and lessons learned are extremely important, as they will be made available to the EC youth network, Council Members, potential donors and the general public for inspiration and reference.



## Your Wiki Platform

The **Earth Charter Youth Groups Wikispace** is the forum in which you will become an established ECYG. The Wikispace page contains profiles of all the ECYGs from all over the world detailing their projects and action plans. A resource for the ECYGs and important information is also provided. The Earth Charter resources, which are described below in the 'resources' section, are all free for use by all ECYGs and are intended to help you in any activity your ECYG intends to do.



## Your Google Map

The **Earth Charter Youth Groups Google Map** is a map that identifies all existing ECYGs around the world, their main projects, their mission and contact information. This map has been created to enable dialogue, international projects and exchange of best practices.

*Are you on the map?*



## Your Facebook Groups

There are two Facebook Groups where you can receive the latest news from the Youth Coordinator and the other youth network members: the [Earth Charter Youth](#) group and the [Earth Charter Youth Europe](#) group.

Don't forget to like the [Earth Charter page](#) too!

If you have any questions you can contact the International Youth Coordinator at: [youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org).

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## II. Suggested Activities and Communication Tips

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The following section is a list of recommended, low-cost activities that can be implemented in order to present and learn about the Earth Charter and the principles of the Earth Charter.

Please feel free to recommend any other fun and effective activities or ideas to the International Youth Coordinator at: [youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org).



These activities are adaptable suggestions, and we encourage you to modify them in order to fit your community

- You can organize an **essay competition** in local schools about an Earth Charter related topic. The best essays can be published in the Earth Charter virtual library! This has been done, for example, by the [ECYG AZUR Development](#) in Congo on the topic of “How can women and girls contribute to sustainable development?” Essay competitions can be done on many different levels: from primary schools to universities (in a more academic way). Try to partner with the local newspaper and ask them to publish the winning essay. Remember to send the essays to Earth Charter International as well; we also want to see them!
- Talk with your school teacher/university professor and ask them for permission to start a lecture with a **5 minute Earth Charter presentation**. Briefly tell about the EC (you can use the official brochure of EC to guide you in this), and at the end tell where you would meet interested individuals later. In that meeting you can try to encourage the interested students to start an ECYG/join your ECYG.
- You can organize an **Earth Charter Endorsement event** in your community! On a busy day, set up a small table in the market place or outside of a university cafeteria and invite people to hear about the Earth Charter. Tell them shortly what this document is all about, and ask them to endorse it - right away! Also, make sure that you guide them to the EC website and tell how they can contribute (by joining your group, for example!). If you plan to do this, contact the International Youth Facilitator first in order to receive further ideas and instructions in order to be as effective as possible.
- Organize a **brainstorming event with your ECYG** about what to do as a group. Divide the group into four subgroups and share the four pillars of the Earth Charter with them, one pillar per one group. Ask the groups to read the pillar thoroughly and then start creating ideas what types of an activities could be organized around those principles. Some examples what the Earth Charter Youth Groups have already done all over the world are:
  - bridging the digital divide in Rwanda;
  - promoting renewable energy on university campuses in the United States;
  - promoting sustainable lifestyles in the Philippines;
  - leading Earth Charter workshops in Brazil;
  - conducting an Earth Charter radio series in Mexico.

- You could also have a workshop on the **Earth Charter and its implementation in daily life**. This is a great activity you can do easily with your youth group, and it is totally free of cost, but very effective and meaningful.
- Provide copies of the **Earth Charter text, brochures or posters**, downloading them from our website. Try to convince a local business to print them for you! This is a great way for them to contribute and join actions for a more sustainable future. One youth activist reported: “I gave an Earth Charter poster to my personal doctor, and he put one in his waiting room!”
- Organize a **drawing contest** about Earth Charter principles at the local school, with the scouts or other youth organization. Present the EC to the students/participants and set up an exhibition at the mall, grocery store, library or church. If you want to have a winner, let the audience decide who the winner is by voting. You can mail the best drawings to the Earth Charter International Secretariat and we can write about the contests on our website!
- You can organize a regular **study group on the Earth Charter**. There are plenty of articles, books and other publications in the Earth Charter Virtual Library that can be used for learning purposes.
- Try to convince your local school/college/university to hold a course on sustainability and the Earth Charter. Earth Charter International has created a full **university course** about the Earth Charter and that can be distributed to the universities that are interested in it. Contact the International Youth Facilitator for more details about the course and the EC school network.
- Use **performing arts** to improve awareness about the Earth Charter. You can, for example, create a play based on the ethical values of Earth Charter and present it at a school or community center. If you are very musical, compose a song and ask the youth group to help with writing the lyrics!
- You can ask your school/university to organize one day without cleaning. At the end of the day it will be a clear example of **how much waste we make everyday**. Likewise, you can encourage people to carry plastic bags with them where they put their own garbage for one day. Both these events will clearly demonstrate how much garbage we produce everyday!

Remember to update your ECYG’s wiki-profile with activities you have done. You are also welcome to write a blog entry for the Earth Charter youth-site! We are more than happy to receive photos, videos, songs, writing and other materials inspired by the Earth Charter and publish them on our website!

**When planning or thinking about an activity to do, ask yourself: what are your strengths, skills and interests? How could you use them to promote the Earth Charter? Concentrate on your own community!**

Promoting your activities can represent a real challenge. This section has been defined to introduce the ECYG to three major tools: **Social Networks, Arts and Communication planning**.



## Investing in social networks

Social networks serve as very powerful tools to help you advertise and promote your events. Facebook and Twitter represent two large well-known platforms which can give visibility to your projects, gain audience and create partnerships.

If you are a small organization just getting started, [Facebook](#) is the first platform you should invest your time in. You can create a page to promote a project or a group to organise the work within the team and/or an event to invite all your friends to. Invite your friends to join the community and keep the page alive with photos, posts and try to encourage dialogue.

If you are a large based organization, try to invest in other platforms such as [Twitter](#) that can help you create partnerships with many other organizations. There is some basic information to know before launching on Twitter: the Tweets are 140 characters long. Your profile must be really thought through (which kind of information do you want to prioritize in your profile description? Do you want to advertise a website within the description? etc...). The tweets you post must match your specific profile, so that your followers know exactly the type of information they will find on your Twitter account. The more specific you are the better. Use the sign @ to talk to people and attract potential partners.

Finally, [LinkedIn](#) represents a professional platform where you can advertise your projects and identify new potential partners, for instance other youth groups/organization, agencies, local and international organisations that carry the same projects or can help you widen your scope.

All of these platforms can help you designing larger scale projects such as: Organization of global and regional youth co-operation gatherings (database, common event), a video conference on global citizenship...



## Art, Media & Entertainment

Using artistic and entertaining ways of communication can serve as positive marketing tools for your events especially for sustainable development projects that carry a lot of important values that are easily transmittable through art.

- Theatre play with school students;
- Songs (and song video);
- Poems about the Earth Charter principles;
- Drawings about the Earth Charter principles;
- Short film/documentary;
- Sportive events (marathons, football competition, social games, hiking and climbing mountains...);
- Invest the radio or the TV to talk about sustainable issues.

### Examples from ECYG

- The Colombian Youth Group [ASOTEMIRE](#) uses **theater** and **mime** to contribute to peace building in Colombia;

- The Ethiopian ECYG [Jimma](#) started a community **radio program** (FM102.0) with Jimma University to disseminate information about sustainable development;
- In Ghana, the Visionary Youth ECYG used **TV and radio** to promote the Earth Charter in media;
- In Kenya, the [Mathare Roots Youth Group](#) is using **Arts – Music & dance, Poem, graffiti and drawing, drama and skits**, design Kenya in its project to help poor children from slums to improve their living conditions;
- In Kenya, the [Students for Global Sustainability](#) organized the “**ECOSHOW**”: an environmental feature at the Kenya broadcasting corporation television (KBC TV);
- [Youth Vision Alliance Network](#) (Nigeria) organized a **football competition** to introduce The Earth Charter to the youth of the community so as to curb the act of violence, cybercrime and intolerance amongst the youth. “However, the idea of the competition transcends the introduction of The Earth Charter; it is more of teaching them how they can apply the principles of The Earth Charter into their day-to-day activities”;
- The Earth Charter Youth Group [Global Unification, The Gambia](#) organized **drawings, poems and essay writing competition** for secondary schools student in the Gambia. This competition was centered on climate change, desertification, land degradation and other environmental issues. The work of the best students was compiled into brochures and used as environmental education kit in schools.
- The Earth Charter Youth Group [Synergy](#) in the United Arab Emirates have led UAE National Environment Week 2013, Walk for Education 2013 and Earth Hour 2013.



## Communication Planning

When organizing an event you will need strong communication planning in order to attract the greatest number of people at your school, campus, community or town, in the most efficient way.

Here is a list designed to help you manage and advertise your projects.

### 1- Before the event

You need to design your project/event/activity in advance in order to be able to attract a large number of participants. Here are some steps you should go through in order to prepare a successful event.

- **Posters** design: if you are doing a project on your campus for instance, try to make it visible by posting it in strategic places. You can even ask a local firm to print them for you and include them as a sponsor for your project/event.
- Dedicated account on **Facebook/Twitter/Blog**: you can use a Facebook page or event to promote your project before it starts. You can also create your own blog and put related articles to attract peoples’ attention. Usually only one person is responsible for posting articles on social networks to keep one direction/vision for communication.
- Advertising events during **lunch break** on campus or during **community events** (market, festivals, gatherings, etc...): try to talk directly to the people going by. You can even prepare a small elevator pitch to be really convincing!
- Advertising the project in your community’s **radio/newspaper/magazines**.

## 2- During the event

The day has arrived, your event is starting! Here are some tips to maintain a good level of communication:

- **Small entertaining events** at the very beginning to attract attention: Flashmobs, songs, dressing up in costumes, you can also use your imagination to talk about your event in a fun and creative way!
- **Photos** and short **movies** of the event: take a lot of photos of the project and post the best one on your communication channels;
- Posting regular information on **social networks**: writing short blogs and articles about participants and what they experienced can raise people's attention;
- Working with your **community media** (radio, newspapers, television) to enlarge your communication scope.

## 3- After the event

- **Publishing** photos and video(s) on the internet: you can create visual support with all the photos of the event (like a poster) and post it throughout your communication channels;
- **Debriefing** with participants and publishing summaries on the internet about the event: this report (that you should put on your [Wikispace](#) page) will be really useful for future events.

If you have any questions you can contact the International Youth Coordinator at: [youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org).

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## III. Previous ECYG Activities

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**E**arth Charter Youth Groups around the world have organized and carried out a large number of activities in their communities. These activities have included many diverse actions such as **seminars, workshops, local capacity building, raising awareness and teaching people about the Earth Charter and Earth Charter principles**. These activities and others can be found by reading ECYG profiles from the Earth Charter Youth Group [Wikispace pages](#) and from our Earth Charter Youth Group [Google Map](#). The following is a list of previous ECYG activities arranged by topics:



### Justice, Nonviolence and Human Rights

- Raising awareness about the rights of children, rights of women, social justice, non-violence, tolerance, peace building, reconciliation, reconstruction, good governance, democracy and human rights;
- Workshop on the roles of civil society organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights;
- Non-violent conflict transformation workshop based on the Earth Charter principle to promote “comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflicts and use collaborative problem-solving to manage and resolve ... conflicts and other disputes” (Principle 16b);
- Workshop on “Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa”.



### Health

- “Lead-Empower-Deliver” -rally to celebrate World AIDS Day;
- HIV/AIDS Awareness Campaigns in schools, colleges, communities, churches and other youth groups;
- Various hygiene and sanitation activities according to community needs;
- Providing clean drinking water.



### Employment and social inclusion

- Working to stop youth poverty and unemployment;
- Emergency relief program for earthquake victims;
- Working with women to empower them;
- Working with Entrepreneurs;

- Raising awareness about the significance of Corporate Social Responsibility;
- Working for clean industrial production mechanisms.



### **Youth Leadership Training**

- Workshops on the roles of youth leaders in the promotion and protection of human rights during elections;
- Promotion of Youth Leadership for Sustainable Development based on values and principles of the Earth Charter;
- Election awareness program and monitoring/reporting on the presidential elections.



### **Outreach to Schools and Communities**

- Provided books and school materials to primary school students;
- Organized discussions about the Global Week on Education in schools
- Held lessons on the Earth Charter in schools and churches;
- Organized sporting events and other recreational activities for youth, e.g. football matches music concerts, poem competition, drawing contests...



### **Environmental Protection**

- Environment & Culture: Promote the realization that a peaceful community needs a clean and safe environment;
- Work for protection of the ecosystem and a wise exploitation of its resources;
- Environmental programs and sanitation awareness campaigns;
- Promotion of clean public areas/cleaner school environment;
- Waste management/installation of garbage bins;
- Green lifestyle campaign;
- Providing clean drinking water;
- Campaigns related to over-usage of plastic bags;
- Defining the existing environmental problems;
- Participating in Earth Hour;
- Campaigns to raise awareness about climate change;
- Campaigns for the protection of animals;
- Working for green urban environment (green open space, green transformation and biodiversity)

For more examples coming from our Youth Groups, [here](#) is a list of articles relative to ECYG projects!

You can also find additional information in our **Youth Group of the Month** [Wikispace section](#) with some amazing stories from our network!



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## IV. Resources

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Here is a list of all the documents, courses and platforms you could use to start an Earth Charter Youth Group, to learn more about the Earth Charter (resources and networks) and to deepen your knowledge about sustainable development issues.



### Earth Charter Youth Groups resources

#### Earth Charter Online Courses

The main purpose of our [courses](#) is to make a positive impact on society by familiarizing local level youth activists with sustainability leadership skills, shared ethics using the Earth Charter as an ethical framework. You can also view previous courses and listen to the live recordings from many of them below.

##### [Youth Leadership, Sustainability and Ethics -online courses 2010, 2011 and 2012](#)

This short course aims to support the participants to realize their role as leaders for a more sustainable future and help them to learn what the common, global values are. The ultimate goal is to further develop the capabilities necessary to conduct Earth Charter inspired action projects in the participants' own communities and link the participants with the wider youth community working for more sustainable future. The records for [2010](#), [2011](#) and [2012](#) can be found on the [Wikispace](#).

##### [African Youth Leadership, Sustainability and Ethics -online course 2012](#)

The Earth Charter and [Organization of African Youth](#) together offered this short course, which aims to support the participants in realizing their role as leaders for a more sustainable future and to make them more aware of the principles for sustainability and to get them to comprehend how these principles can be applied at an individual and organizational level. This course drove for positive change in participants' everyday lives and created a sense of global responsibility. An emphasis was made on the African context as well as Rio+20 and how African youth could play more of a role as we near the UNCSD in June, 2012. Power Point presentations of the courses can be found [here](#).

##### [Euro-Arab Sustainability Leadership Youth Forum](#)

In partnership with [SHIFT Initiative](#), the Earth Charter collaborated in this intercultural forum to move beyond “just tolerance” and construct a global vision for sustainable development. Young sustainable leaders in the Euro-Arab region promote and contribute to the transition to sustainable ways of living and to 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. Find more on these intercultural forum and courses [here](#).

### [Liderazgo Juvenil, Sustentabilidad y Ética](#)

This Spanish course aims to support the participants to realize their role as leaders for a more sustainable future and help them to learn what the common, global values are. Additionally, at the end of the course the students had to make a draft for action inspired by the Earth Charter. The youth had to define a challenge for them or their community, and identify which of the principles of the Earth Charter are leading in this challenge. Details of this course (in Spanish) can be found [here](#).

### **Earth Charter Youth Network blog**

The youth network blog contains the most up-to-date and pertinent information about the activities of the youth network. It is frequently updated with news and resources that may be valuable in your activities. You can find our youth blog from our website [here](#). Other news from the network can be found [here](#).

### **Earth Charter youth network presentation**

This is an [introductory presentation](#) which includes information about the challenges facing the Earth, sustainable development, the Earth Charter and the Earth Charter youth network. It has been prepared by the ECI and you are encouraged to use it to promote the Earth Charter and the Earth Charter youth network.

### **Earth Charter Youth Group Wikispace**

Our [Wikispace](#) is an open networking and resource site for all Earth Charter Youth Groups (ECYGs). The Wikispace includes profiles of over 50 ECYGs from more than 30 different countries, resource links for the ECYGS and information about how to become a registered ECYG. It is the essential site for networking and cooperation between youth activists working with the Earth Charter. Many resources are available from our Wikispace [resource page](#).

These include, but are not limited to:

- **Earth Charter Youth Network Poster**

The Earth Charter youth network [poster template](#) is available for download. It can be modified to fit your needs in multiple ways such as spreading information and announcing meetings.

- **Recommendations for Funding and Partnership Proposals**

This [document](#) gives short guidelines about how to start when looking for funds and partnerships for small projects and other activities.

- **ECYG Project Proposal Template**

This is a modifiable [template](#) which gives a structure for project proposal writing.

### **EC Workshop Toolkit**

This [toolkit](#) is a very valuable and detailed instrument that will help you organize an Earth Charter Workshop.



## The Earth Charter resources

### The Earth Charter Text

The [full text](#) of the Earth Charter, in 35 languages, is available from our [virtual library](#). It is also included, in English, at the end of this toolkit.

### Earth Charter Virtual Library

The Earth Charter [Virtual Library](#) is an extensive database of Earth Charter resources. Most of the documents and books discussed in this toolkit, along with many other resources, can be found at the Earth Charter virtual library. It contains electronic copies of numerous Powerpoint presentations, essays, books and other valuable tools in many different languages.

### Videos

The ECI has developed an 11 minute video introductions to the Earth Charter available in English, Spanish, French, German, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Mandarin and Portuguese. You can find the English, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and French versions [here](#). In addition there are plenty of Earth Charter related [videos](#). One of these videos was made by Earth Charter youth activists and is available [here](#).

You are also welcome to create your own video/ presentation on Earth Charter and share it with us on our video library!

### Earth Charter Initiative Handbook

This [Earth Charter Initiative Handbook](#) has been prepared by the Earth Charter International (ECI) Council and Secretariat as a general guide for all those who are working with the Earth Charter in many different nations and cultures around the world. The Handbook provides basic information on the origin, nature and purpose of the Earth Charter, the structure and mission of the Earth Charter Initiative, and the organization, goals and policies of ECI.

### Good Practices Using the Earth Charter

This [book](#) offers 27 detailed examples of how the Earth Charter has been used in a variety of educational settings. The internationally diverse case studies highlight how groups and individuals are using the Earth Charter as a tool for education for sustainable development. Some especially helpful plans about organizing Earth Charter workshops can be found on pages 16-18 and 43-44 and a basic outline of Earth Charter group activities can be found on page 108.

### The Earth Charter Guidebook for Teachers

This [guidebook](#) is an important resource that stresses the values and practicality of the Earth Charter as an educational tool. It explains strategies of how to make the Earth Charter relevant and accessible to youth of different ages. It is a good resource for teachers and other leaders, which includes lessons and activity plans built around many principles of the Earth Charter.

The guidebook includes sample lesson plans for: Creative Arts, Language and Literature, Foreign Languages, History, Social Sciences - Philosophy/ Society/Ethics/ Religion, Mathematics, Economics, Science – Biology, and Environmental Science/Technology. These lesson plans can be found on pages 25-33 respectively.

## **Earth Charter in Action: Toward a Sustainable Development**

This book is a collection of essays which demonstrates what sustainability principles mean in practice. It has many examples from all over the world: from biodiversity to business to rehabilitating child soldiers. The book is comprised of essays written by over 70 co-authors including such eminent figures as **Mikhail Gorbachev, Wangari Maathai, Jane Goodall, Ruud Lubbers** and **HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal**.

This [book](#) is a great tool when you are organizing an Earth Charter work shop on specific theme. ECYGs have used this book to help discuss, among other issues about the Earth Charter and millennium development goals, Earth Charter and global citizenship and the Earth Charter and climate change.

## **Brochure**

The Earth Charter Initiative also has [informative brochures](#) which include, in addition to the text of the Earth Charter, essential information about our history, mission, goals, strategy and areas of focus. This is a practical tool for presenting the Earth Charter to people who don't know anything about it.

## **List of Universities and Youth Organizations that Have Endorsed the Earth Charter**

Links to the [lists of universities](#) and youth organizations that have endorsed the Earth Charter can be found on an article from our youth blog.

## **Earth Charter School Network wikipage**

This is another [public page](#) that is engineered for use by teachers, professors and other educators. It contains a database of educational materials and a forum for collaboration and the exchange of ideas.

## **e-GLO**

[e-GLO](#) (Earth Charter Global Learning Opportunity) is a semester-long, online course that provides a great way to learn about promoting your youth group and community development projects through global digital media. The debut course was offered in English to 20-30 youth aged 15-30. For more information about e-GLO, please contact our International Youth Facilitator at [youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org).

## **EC-Assess**

[EC-Assess](#) is a tool based on the ethical framework of the Earth Charter. EC-Assess measures both a subject's level of declared commitment and level of performance in pursuit of a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. The tool is designed to be applicable and useful in a very wide variety of contexts, ranging from individual lifestyle assessment to internal or external organizational review. You can, for example, evaluate your universities, home communities or organization's level

of sustainability. Once you have the results you can organize a brainstorming meeting where you can think of possibilities to enhance the sustainability level of that particular environment.

If you have any questions you can contact the International Youth Coordinator at: [youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org).



## V. The Earth Charter

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### PREAMBLE

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

### Earth, Our Home

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

### The Global Situation

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous—but not inevitable.

### The Challenges Ahead

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our

environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

## **Universal Responsibility**

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

## **PRINCIPLES**

### **I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE**

1. *Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.*
  - a. Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.
  - b. Affirm faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and in the intellectual, artistic, ethical, and spiritual potential of humanity.
2. *Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.*
  - a. Accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources comes the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people.
  - b. Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.
3. *Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.*
  - a. Ensure that communities at all levels guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and provide everyone an opportunity to realize his or her full potential.

- b. Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible.
4. *Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.*
- a. Recognize that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations.
  - b. Transmit to future generations values, traditions, and institutions that support the long-term flourishing of Earth's human and ecological communities.

In order to fulfill these four broad commitments, it is necessary to:

## 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.*
- a. Adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives.
  - b. Establish and safeguard viable nature and biosphere reserves, including wild lands and marine areas, to protect Earth's life support systems, maintain biodiversity, and preserve our natural heritage.
  - c. Promote the recovery of endangered species and ecosystems.
  - d. Control and eradicate non-native or genetically modified organisms harmful to native species and the environment, and prevent introduction of such harmful organisms.
  - e. Manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.
  - f. Manage the extraction and use of non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels in ways that minimize depletion and cause no serious environmental damage.
6. *Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.*
- a. Take action to avoid the possibility of serious or irreversible environmental harm even when scientific knowledge is incomplete or inconclusive.
  - b. Place the burden of proof on those who argue that a proposed activity will not cause significant harm, and make the responsible parties liable for environmental harm.

- c. Ensure that decision making addresses the cumulative, long-term, indirect, long distance, and global consequences of human activities.
  - d. Prevent pollution of any part of the environment and allow no build-up of radioactive, toxic, or other hazardous substances.
  - e. Avoid military activities damaging to the environment.
7. *Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.*
- a. Reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used in production and consumption systems, and ensure that residual waste can be assimilated by ecological systems.
  - b. Act with restraint and efficiency when using energy, and rely increasingly on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
  - c. Promote the development, adoption, and equitable transfer of environmentally sound technologies.
  - d. Internalize the full environmental and social costs of goods and services in the selling price, and enable consumers to identify products that meet the highest social and environmental standards.
  - e. Ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction.
  - f. Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.
8. *Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.*
- a. Support international scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, with special attention to the needs of developing nations.
  - b. Recognize and preserve the traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures that contribute to environmental protection and human well-being.
  - c. Ensure that information of vital importance to human health and environmental protection, including genetic information, remains available in the public domain.

### III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. *Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.*
- a. Guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required.

- b. Empower every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves.
  - c. Recognize the ignored, protect the vulnerable, serve those who suffer, and enable them to develop their capacities and to pursue their aspirations.
10. *Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.*
- a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.
  - b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.
  - c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labor standards.
  - d. Require multinational corporations and international financial organizations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.
11. *Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.*
- a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.
  - b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.
  - c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.
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.*
- a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic or social origin.
  - b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.
  - c. Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.
  - d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

## IV. DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE, 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.*
  - a. Uphold the right of everyone to receive clear and timely information on environmental matters and all development plans and activities which are likely to affect them or in which they have an interest.
  - b. Support local, regional and global civil society, and promote the meaningful participation of all interested individuals and organizations in decision making.
  - c. Protect the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and dissent.
  - d. Institute effective and efficient access to administrative and independent judicial procedures, including remedies and redress for environmental harm and the threat of such harm.
  - e. Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.
  - f. Strengthen local communities, enabling them to care for their environments, and assign environmental responsibilities to the levels of government where they can be carried out most effectively.
  
14. *Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.*
  - a. Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development.
  - b. Promote the contribution of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences in sustainability education.
  - c. Enhance the role of the mass media in raising awareness of ecological and social challenges.
  - d. Recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living.
  
15. *Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.*
  - a. Prevent cruelty to animals kept in human societies and protect them from suffering.
  - b. Protect wild animals from methods of hunting, trapping, and fishing that cause extreme, prolonged, or avoidable suffering.
  - c. Avoid or eliminate to the full extent possible the taking or destruction of non-targeted species.

16. *Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.*

- a. Encourage and support mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among all peoples and within and among nations.
- b. Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflict and use collaborative problem solving to manage and resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.
- c. Demilitarize national security systems to the level of a non-provocative defense posture, and convert military resources to peaceful purposes, including ecological restoration.
- d. Eliminate nuclear, biological, and toxic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
- e. Ensure that the use of orbital and outer space supports environmental protection and peace.
- f. Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. To fulfill this promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the Charter.

This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision. We must deepen and expand the global dialogue that generated the Earth Charter, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom.

Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential for effective governance.

In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the United Nations, fulfill their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of Earth Charter principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.

### **ORIGIN OF THE EARTH CHARTER**

The Earth Charter was created by the independent Earth Charter Commission, which was convened as a follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in order to produce a global consensus statement of values and principles for a sustainable future. The document was developed over nearly a decade through an extensive process of international consultation, to which over five thousand people contributed. The Charter has been formally endorsed by thousands of organizations, including UNESCO and the IUCN (World Conservation Union). For more information, please visit [www.EarthCharter.org](http://www.EarthCharter.org).



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