

The Earth Charter Benchmark Draft

The following is the latest draft of the preamble to the proposed Earth Charter, which also includes 18 principles (not printed). The charter is being developed by the Earth Charter Commission, headed by Maurice Strong and Mikhail Gorbachev. SGI-USA members will be involved in the consultation process about the charter's language.

Earth is our home and home to all living beings. Earth itself is alive. We are part of an evolving universe. Human beings are members of an interdependent community of life with a magnificent diversity of life forms and cultures. We are humbled before the beauty of Earth and share a reverence for life and the sources of our being. We give thanks for the heritage that we have received from past generations and embrace our responsibilities to present and future generations.

The Earth Community stands at a defining moment. The biosphere is governed by laws that we ignore at our own peril. Human beings have acquired the ability to radically alter the environment and evolutionary processes. Lack of foresight and misuse of knowledge and power threaten the fabric of life and the foundations of local and global security. There is great violence, poverty and suffering in our world. A fundamental change of course is needed.

The choice is before us: to care for the Earth or to participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. We must reinvent industrial–technological civilization, finding new ways to balance self and community, having and being, diversity and unity, short-term and long-term, using and nurturing.

In the midst of all our diversity, we are one humanity and one Earth family with a shared destiny. The challenges before us require an inclusive ethical vision. Partnerships must be forged and cooperation fostered at local, bioregional, national and international levels. In solidarity with one another and the community of life, we the peoples of the world commit ourselves to action guided by the following interrelated principles....

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