

Contribution

The Earth Charter, Spirituality and Sustainable Development

Richard Clugston

THE Earth Charter was completed and approved by the Earth Charter Commission in 2000. It is an integrated ethical agenda to guide us toward a just, sustainable and peaceful future. The Earth Charter affirms the interconnectedness between the critical challenges facing humanity, e.g., eliminating violence and poverty, providing sustainable livelihoods for all, and caring for the whole community of life and future generations. It highlights shared ethical and spiritual values as foundational to meeting these challenges.

This article provides background on the Earth Charter and describes the work of the Earth Charter Task Force on Religion, Spirituality and Ethics. Using the Earth Charter principles, this Task Force has sought to deepen and strengthen the United Nations' sustainable development agenda. The current application of these principles to some of the sustainable development goals (Agenda 2030) will be described.

1. What is the Earth Charter?

The development of an Earth Charter originated in the call of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 for the creation of "a universal declaration" that would "consolidate and extend relevant legal principles" creating "new norms needed to maintain livelihoods and life on our shared planet" and "to guide state behavior in the transition to sustainable development." Drafting an Earth Charter was part of the process leading to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, but the time for such a declaration was not right. The Rio Declaration expressed the common agreement on environment and development, at the time. However, many felt a deeper vision of sustainable development was needed.

In 1994, Maurice Strong (Secretary-General of the Rio Summit) and Mikhail Gorbachev, working through organizations they each founded (Earth Council and Green Cross International respectively), launched an

initiative (with the support from the Dutch Government) to develop an Earth Charter as a civil society initiative. From 1994 to 2000 the drafting and consultation process drew on hundreds of international documents on environment and development and a worldwide participatory consultation process involving thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations.

The Earth Charter was approved by the Earth Charter Commission at UNESCO in Paris in 2000. The Chair of the Drafting Committee, Steven Rockefeller, states, “The Earth Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. The four major themes of the Earth Charter are expressed in its four parts: Part I, Respect and Care for the Community of Life; Part II, Ecological Integrity; Part III, Social and Economic Justice; and Part IV, Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace. The Earth Charter vision reflects the conviction that caring for people and caring for Earth are two interrelated dimensions of one great task. It supports the view that economic institutions and activities should promote equitable human development and should value and protect Earth’s ecological systems and the many services they provide. The Earth Charter is both a people-centered and ecosystem-centered document. Recognizing that our environmental, economic, social, political, and spiritual challenges are interdependent, the Earth Charter provides an integrated framework for thinking about and addressing these issues. The result is a fresh, broad conception of what constitutes a sustainable society and sustainable development.” (From Earth Charter International “The Earth Charter History”)

The Earth Charter guides us toward a deeper and fuller vision of what sustainability really requires. Its 16 main principles and 61 supporting principles provide a framework for sustainable development, or “good globalization” developed through a broadly inclusive and participatory consultation process.

2. The Earth Charter, Ethics and Spirituality

The Earth Charter affirms the three pillars of sustainable development—social, environmental and economic well being—as well as commitment to future generations. It articulates and refines what these pillars mean and shows their inextricable interconnections. It deepens the triple bottom line, strengthening the importance of people and planet. It also replaces our narrow and short-term anthropocentrism with a framework which draw us to “respect and care for the community

of life.”

There is a consensus today that there are three distinct but interrelated dimensions of sustainable development, namely, the social, economic and environmental. They are often described as the three pillars of sustainable development. This understanding is sound as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough or deep enough ... there is a fourth pillar—the global ethical and spiritual consciousness that is awakening in civil society around the world and that finds expression in the Earth Charter. This global ethical consciousness is in truth the first pillar of a sustainable way of life, because it involves the internalization of the values of sustainable human development and provides the inspiration and motivation to act as well as essential guidance regarding the path to genuine sustainability. The lack of progress in the transition to sustainable development is often attributed to a lack of political will. What is not generally acknowledged is that the lack of political will reflects a lack of ethical vision and moral courage among our leaders and to some degree among most of us—we, the people. The Earth Charter recognizes the ethical and spiritual as well as the environmental, social, and economic dimensions of the sustainable development challenge. (Rockefeller, 2010)

Ruud Lubbers, an Earth Charter commissioner, and former Prime Minister of the Netherlands states, “It is remarkable to consider the appreciation of the spiritual dimension of life, as expressed in the Earth Charter. Among the universal spiritual values recognized in the Earth Charter are reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, reverence for life, compassion, love, hope, humility, peace, appreciation of beauty, ‘being more not having more’ and the joyful celebration of life... Spirituality can blossom in a world in which people, planet and profits balance the importance of the market economy with corporate social responsibility, and where the Earth Charter complements the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We might even begin to speak about the four P’s: People, Planet, Profit and ‘Pneuma’.” (Lubbers, et al. 2008, p. 31)

The Earth Charter articulates some of the deeper, ethical and spiritual dimensions of sustainability, as the following quotes (and paraphrases) from the text illustrate:

- In the midst of our magnificent diversity of cultures, we are one human family with a common destiny;

- We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and the global are linked;
- Humanity does not “own” the planet but shares it with a myriad of life forms with which we are bound together in an Earth community;
- Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life.
- The protection of Earth’s vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust;
- 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;
- All beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.
- For making headway in the great transition to a just, sustainable and peaceful future, fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. This requires a change of mind and heart, a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We need to identify ourselves with the whole Earth Community as well as our local communities and form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another.

The Earth Charter affirms that development—both economic and personal—is not primarily about short term economic gain (thereby owning, consuming and controlling ever more goods and services). Rather it is about building those conditions and capacities necessary for full human development for all in a flourishing Earth community. To paraphrase the Earth Charter, after basic needs are met, development should be about being more, not having more. Real transformative change will require the reorientation of development goals toward psychological and spiritual growth and sustainable living.

The Earth Charter recognizes that our failure to place our economic policies in the broader context of the environment and and humanity’s social and spiritual existence has led to a corrosive materialism in the world’s more economically advantaged regions and has exacerbated conditions and perceptions of deprivation among the masses of the world’s peoples. It has also accelerated the destruction of many species and the ecological systems essential for our well being.

Development, to be truly sustainable, must provide the conditions necessary for everyone’s spiritual growth, defined by Rami Shapiro as

an “ever deepening capacity to embrace life with justice, compassion, curiosity, awe, wonder, serenity and humility.”

All compassionately spiritual traditions affirm that there is an ultimate goodness that we are here to help make fully present in the world, and that we can develop an identity more consciously informed by a deeper source, a higher power, a greater self. The major task in life is to awaken to this deeper reality and live in accordance with it. This requires a major effort to bring our awareness out of preoccupation with petty and self-centered concerns into a compassionate connection with all life, and to live in ways that all can live. Each compassionate spiritual tradition has developed a set of transformative practices to enable one to focus attention, desire and action to move beyond one’s small self into an identity more informed by this deeper source.

3. The Earth Charter Task Force on Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics

This Task Force was formed in 2005 to engage a broad range of individuals, institutions, and organizations concerned with religion, spirituality, ethics, and the Earth Charter. It assists such individuals and groups in integrating the Earth Charter with their efforts toward creating a just, peaceful, and sustainable future for the entire Earth Community.

Along with science, economics, and policy, the world’s religions, spiritual perspectives, and ethical values can play a catalyzing role in moving the human community toward a sustainable future. The vast majority of the world’s peoples draw inspiration and guidance from their religious beliefs and practices while many outside of formal religious institutions rely on particular spiritual paths.

For millennia the world’s religious, spiritual and ethical traditions have provided ethical grounding for the shaping of various cultures throughout the world. Through indigenous traditions and the Axial age religions arising in the last 3,000 years, humans have oriented themselves to the mystery of existence, to relations with other humans, and to nature itself.

The Earth Charter recognizes the immense contributions that have been made by religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions. Indeed, the Earth Charter affirms the rich multicultural and multireligious expressions present in the human community. While respecting this remarkable diversity, it also invites the world’s religious, spiritual, and ethical traditions into dialogue with the emerging global ethics represented in the Earth Charter.

The Charter was drafted with a spirit that calls individuals and institutions to help create the foundations for a common future. Thus, there is a recognition of shared although differentiated responsibilities for the flourishing of the Earth Community. During the drafting process of the Charter, scholars and leaders of the world's religious and indigenous traditions were able to give comments on the drafts of the Charter in various venues around the world.

During the three year conference series on world religions and ecology at Harvard's Center for the Study of World Religions, over 800 scholars and representatives of the world's religions gave feedback on the various drafts of the Earth Charter. In the global Earth Charter consultation, theologians, experts and religious organizations from Bahā'i, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Indigenous, Islamic, Jain, Jewish, and Shinto traditions shared their visions for a just, sustainable and peaceful world. Apart from these inputs, a broad range of religious and interreligious texts, statements and declarations were reviewed and used as a basis for the Earth Charter's inclusive global vision of shared values and common goals for sustainable living.

The Harvard conference series led to the formation of the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) now based at Yale University. Mary Evelyn Tucker, the Co-director of the Forum is serving as a co-chair of the Task Force. (The description of the Task Force above is adapted from the FORE website, see <http://fore.yale.edu/>)

The Soetendorp Institute helps coordinate the Task Force. As part of his efforts as Co-Chair of this Task Force, Rabbi Soetendorp has drafted the interreligious statement "Towards Rio+20 and Beyond—A Turning Point in Earth History." The statement formulated a strong and unified message of the world's religions to the major UN Rio+20 Conference that took place in June 2012. The Soetendorp Institute took the lead in developing the Spiritual Dimensions of Sustainability Project, which is described below.

4. Bringing Earth Charter Ethics and Spirituality into the UN Sustainable Development Framework

Since the Earth Charter was completed in 2000, Earth Charter International has focused on having the governments represented at the United Nations acknowledge the contribution of the Earth Charter and to translate its principles into action. Major efforts involved working with the Commission on Sustainable Development, The World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), and with UN agencies (e.g., UNESCO,

UNEP, UNDP) to endorse the Earth Charter and adopt policies consistent with its principles. UNESCO (and IUCN) did recognize the Earth Charter and some language in the Johannesburg Declaration was drawn from the Earth Charter.

However, until well into the preparatory process (2011–2012) for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), governments and many NGOs were incapable or unwilling to recognize the need for fundamental, transformative change and to acknowledge the interconnectedness of our global challenges and the need to adopt a new development agenda with an integrated triple bottom line of sustainability at its center.

Recognizing the opportunity that Rio+20 offered to advance the Earth Charter, the task force held a series of meetings at the Earth Charter +10 Conference in Ahmedabad, India in 2010. This conference called for deepening the general understanding of sustainable development, and inspired “the Spiritual Dimensions of Sustainability Project” which invited religious, spiritual and ethical organizations to

- 1) Participate in a global conversation aimed at deepening the understanding of these spiritual or “inner” dimensions of sustainability;
- 2) Promote a greater public awareness of this “fourth pillar” of sustainability, especially by bringing these dimensions to bear on the major international debates and processes including the Rio+20 Conference and the UN Decade for Sustainable Development (DESD); speaking in a unified voice for justice, sustainability, and all-embracing peace; and developing joint strategies for advocating effectively for approaches to sustainable development that include the spiritual purposes of life;
- 3) Deepen the practice of compassionate and sustainable living through exchanging good practices and available educational materials.

From 2011 to date, the Task Force, in cooperation with many religious, spiritual and values based organizations, has convened a series of consultations on strengthening ethical and spiritual input into Rio+20 (and later into the sustainable development goals).

Hosted by Soka Gakkai International and the Forum 21 Institute, these discussions took place in New York City beginning in December 2011. In the first meeting, participants shared their organizations’ recommendations for the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference, identified common priorities, and strategized as to how to work together most

effectively on the Road to Rio+20 to ensure that our policy priorities were included in the final outcome document.

This first meeting began with a review of the recommendations from the 75 submissions to the Rio+20 secretariat that focused on ethics, spirituality, and the Earth Charter. These submissions affirmed the need for a stronger, ethical and spiritual framework for sustainable development. They emphasized the adoption of specific policy mechanisms, such as ombudspersons for future generations, implementing the Precautionary Principle, new measures of well-being to replace GDP, and millennium consumption goals. We continued to meet before and during Rio+20. The Earth Charter was featured in a major conference at Rio+20 hosted by Earth Charter International, at Soka Gakki International's "Seeds of Hope" exhibit and in the People's Sustainability Treaty on Ethical and Spiritual Values for Sustainable Development.

5. The Earth Charter and Agenda 2030

A major outcome of Rio+20 was the commitment by governments to develop and adopt (in September 2015) new, universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) that would incorporate the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals into a broader framework. SDGs are to be the guides, the dashboard for this transformative change. They are to be a set of action-oriented, concise and easy to communicate goals that could help drive the implementation of sustainable development. 13 intergovernmental open working group meetings led to the completion of the Zero Draft of the SDGs in July 2014. This extensive process, and the intergovernmental negotiation sessions in 2015 were remarkable in the emphasis placed on truly transformative change toward a truly integrated triple bottom line.

In partnership with the Forum 21 Institute, the Task Force hosted a series of consultations focused on spiritual and ethical analyses of the SDGs and their targets. These consultations were held in New York City during or immediately after the UN intergovernmental working group and negotiating sessions on the SDGs and targets. There have been two major and interconnected outcomes of these gatherings: 1. the drafting of a book, and 2. the development of recommendations for the goals, targets and indicators for sustainable development.

Many of the participants in these ongoing discussions agreed to write chapters for the book titled "Earth Ethics, Spiritual Values and the New UN Development Agenda," edited by this paper's author and Mirian Vilela, the Executive Director of Earth Charter International. The book

emphasizes the need for transformative change and describes the ethical and spiritual foundations for the new development paradigm. It offers a brief history of ethics and spirituality at the UN featuring statements, declarations, events, NGO activities and organizations. Chapter authors describe their ethical and spiritual principles and use them to evaluate and strengthen the current proposals for sustainable development goals, targets and indicators.

Section One features some significant social movements affirming diverse ethical and spiritual perspectives for development, including Integral, Interspiritual, Ethical Humanism, and peoples movements for transformative change (People's Sustainability Treaties). The integral message is reorienting SDGs to support full human development, i.e., waking up and growing up. Interspirituality encourages drawing from the common principles and practices of all compassionate spiritualities to guide the SDGs. The People's Sustainability Treaties recommend a set of sectoral goals to be incorporated in the SDGs.

In Section Two, diverse religious and spiritual organizations describe their traditions' beliefs and principles and apply this lens to analyzing SDGs and recommending improvements. Groups include the Temple of Understanding, Sukyo Mahikari, Bahai's, Islamic, Buddhist, Christian and Indigenous perspectives. To be completed in August 2016, the book ends with a set of reflections on the way forward, and suggests priority targets and indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals drawn from the ethical and spiritual perspectives described in the book's chapters.

6. Spiritual and Ethical Priorities for Agenda 2030

"Transforming our World, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was adopted by Heads of State on Sept. 25 2015 (immediately after the Pope's address to the UN General Assembly). This Agenda contains 17 sustainable development goals and 169 targets for reaching those goals (To review these goals and targets see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>). The task remaining (at the time this article was written) is to develop indicators that will enable us to measure the extent to which these targets have been reached.

Agenda 2030 and the Paris Climate Agreement (adopted in December 2015) were watershed events, with the world's governments agreeing unanimously to adopt agendas and commitments for transformative change—ending the fossil fuel era and implementing a new develop-

ment agenda that will provide for the basic needs of all without crossing planetary boundaries.

The UN Secretary General called for the integration of these two major agreements into one comprehensive sustainable development agenda. Christiana Figueres (UNFCCC) addressing this integration, argues that the overarching threat of catastrophic climate change sets the context and direction for sustainable development (e.g., more carbon in the atmosphere = more poverty on the ground). The sustainable development goals, their targets, and most importantly their indicators should provide the means to rapidly reduce both greenhouse gases and extreme poverty, as priorities in a focused transformative sustainable development agenda.

The 169 targets and many of the 229 proposed indicators are laudable in that they identify many important actions that must be taken to extend needed opportunities and build capacities for all, and to protect and restore the health of the ecological systems necessary for our well-being.

Unfortunately, key indicators to guide and measure transformative change are missing. Many of the proposed indicators are “business as usual” accountability measures. There is a real danger that using such indicators will reinforce the engine of unsustainable growth under the guise of sustainable development. Providing more and more goods and services to an ever increasing human population without crossing planetary boundaries is a daunting challenge. It can only be met if indicators for genuine transformative change are developed for the sustainable development goals and targets.

7. Recommended SDG Targets and Indicators

The following illustrate the application of the Earth Charter lens to two of the SDGs, showing how the Earth Charter’s ethical and spiritual perspective would guide sustainable development policy: (Many of these recommendations have been adapted from Earth Charter International’s input into Rio+20, see Clugston, et al. 2011.)

Overarching Recommendation: Acknowledge the fundamental importance of shared ethical and spiritual values in making the transition to a sustainable way of life.

A shared vision of ethical and spiritual values is necessary to inspire and guide cooperative action for change. Shared values awaken a sense of common purpose and build community spirit. In an increasingly in-

terdependent world, achieving the environmental, economic, and social goals associated with sustainability requires worldwide collaboration, and cooperation is not possible without shared values and a sense of common purpose. The vision of a sustainable future as an inclusive social and ecological ideal that is good, right and just is what is needed to inspire strong commitment and drive change.

The emergence throughout the world of a new ethical and spiritual consciousness that supports the transition to a just, sustainable and peaceful world is one of the most promising developments of the last sixty years. The ethical and spiritual values associated with this new consciousness have been given expression in many intergovernmental and civil society declarations such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the World Charter for Nature, the Rio Declaration, and the Earth Charter. The Earth Charter identifies the basic spiritual challenge that the world community must address if it is to make the transition to strong sustainability when it states: We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more.

This guideline is, of course, entirely consistent with the teachings of all the world's great wisdom traditions. The values associated with human rights, cultural diversity, social and economic justice, a culture of peace, intergenerational responsibility, and respect and care for the greater community of life, are all part of what 'being more' means in the 21st century. In addition, the Earth Charter recognizes the importance of reverence for the mystery of being, compassion, love, hope, and the joyful celebration of life. 'Being more' in the spirit of these values and ideals is the only sure path to a sustainable world.

Recommendations for Sustainable Development Goal 16: Promote Peaceful and Inclusive Societies for Sustainable Development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Certainly the targets listed in Goal 16 are all necessary but not sufficient to create a world that works for all. The Earth Charter calls us to respect and care for the community of life, and its definition of inclusive societies would include all members of the more than human Earth community, as well as future generations. We recommend adding the following targets:

Recommendation 16.1: Express responsibility to future generations by implementing the precautionary principle and establishing Ombuds-

persons for Future Generations at global, national and local levels.

As defined by the Brundtland Commission report, sustainable development requires we meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, within the limits imposed by the capacity of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. This universal responsibility for intergenerational equity is expressed in Earth Charter Principle 4 which calls us to Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

Implicit in the call for Ombudspersons for Future Generations is a deep commitment to implementing the precautionary principle as adopted in the Rio Declaration and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, amongst other international agreements. The Earth Charter's formulation of the precautionary principle is pro-active and progressive:

Earth Charter Principle 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.

Recommendation 16.2: Ensure that the United Nations adopts mechanisms of trusteeship for global common goods on behalf all peoples, the greater community of life, and future generations.

Global common goods include obligations for maintaining the integrity of planetary boundaries and the ecological wellbeing of all, overseeing markets to ensure that they are protective of non-market common goods, and ensuring impartiality between all interests—individual, civil society, corporate, and national.

The basis for these duties is well articulated in the Preamble of the Earth Charter:

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 notion of an international institution exercising a trusteeship function is not new. Indeed, under the auspices of the UN, a Trusteeship Council was enacted to act on behalf of states transitioning from colonisation to independence. This Trusteeship Council was mandated to speak for the yet-to-be state entities which had no legal standing or representation. The Trusteeship Council acted on behalf of entities that were not legally recognized. An obvious parallel can be drawn between the functioning of this Council and a global trusteeship function over global public goals and common goods on behalf of all peoples, the greater community of life, and future generations. The first four principles of the Earth Charter provide one articulation of the necessary goals.

Recommendations for Sustainable Development Goal 4: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) was a major, and neglected, priority of Agenda 21. Tasked with coordinating the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO's effort to promote ESD through formal educational institutions, as well as many nonformal and media based educational/advertising enterprises, is making an important contribution. However, universal access to quality education (let alone ESD) for both boys and girls, even at the primary level, is an elusive goal. The shift to a sustainable society is deeply dependent on the educational system, and that education should address the material, social and spiritual dimensions of human development, and in its fullest sense, education must provide the space for value-based sustainable learning.

The importance of access for all to quality education for sustainable development is articulated in Earth Charter principle 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 oppor-

tunities 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.

The right kind of education, training and public awareness is foundational to realize transformative change toward strong sustainability in our lifestyles, communities and policies. As we seek to increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship, how do we ensure that the competencies they gain will not be used to advance unsustainable enterprises?

Ironically, it is the most educated that have created and are benefitting most from unsustainable practices. Our formal and informal education institutions all too often promote intolerant social projects, or the excessive pursuit of individual consumption and gratification.

The Earth Charter promotes access for all to quality education, but a specific kind of education for sustainable development and global citizenship.

Recommendation for SDG 4: The targets in SDG 4 should be realized, but these need to be realized in a values context that enhances our capacities and motivation to:

- a. Engage deeply and effectively in contemplative practices that awaken us to our great work, our vocations, where our deepest passions meet the real needs of the world.
- b. Experience our interconnectedness and interdependence with the whole living world embracing diverse cultures of people and animals, agriculture and wilderness, the cycles of life and the seasons, as well as the unfolding cosmos.
- c. Feel, and act from, compassionate concern for others, doing no harm, reaching out to assist all beings.
- d. Live in ways that all can live, consuming no more than one's fair share of Earth's bounty—choosing products and services (e.g., food, energy, transportation, housing) that are ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable (e.g., local, fair trade, organic,

- carbon and pollution neutral, humane).
- e. Ensure that our decision making and conflict resolution processes are open, enabling all to participate and clarify their preferences and grievances. Our process capacities—to be humble, honest and respectful; to not blame and to forgive; and to compromise for the good of all—are foundational for arriving at structures and solutions that further everyone’s development.
 - f. Act to shift policies to support a just and sustainable future by voting, lobbying, and participating in political decision making at all levels to promote policies to better care for future generations and the whole community of life, e.g., creating better measures of genuine progress than GDP, internalizing social and environmental costs in pricing goods and services, eliminating perverse subsidies, and creating ombudspersons and trusteeship structures at all governmental levels to effectively represent the interests of all members of the life community, current and future.

8. The Way Forward

The Earth Charter was ahead of its time, but its time seems to be now. There is a great awakening (in the midst of much resistance) to a new spiritually and ethically grounded development agenda. As Pope Francis said in *Laudato Si’*.

“The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: ‘As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... 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.’” (para 207)

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Author Biography

Rick Clugston, Ph.D. coordinates the Sustainability and Global Affairs program at the Center for Earth Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. He also is the Co-Director of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future and directs the Sustainable Development Programs of Forum 21. From 2009 to 2012, Rick directed the Earth Charter Project at the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education at Florida Gulf Coast University. From 1989 to 2009, Rick served as Executive Director of the Center for Respect of Life and Environment in Washington, DC, where he assisted religious and academic institutions in transforming their teaching and practices to support strong sustainability and directed Earth Charter US. Rick was Publisher and Editor of *Earth Ethics: Evolving Values for an Earth Community* and the Deputy Editor of *The International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education* (MCB University Publications). Prior to coming to Washington, Rick worked at the University of Minnesota as a faculty member in the College of Human Ecology, and later as a strategic planner in Academic Affairs, Continuing Education and the Office of the President. He received his doctorate in Higher Education Policy and Planning from the University of Minnesota and his masters in Human Development from the University of Chicago.