

EC+10 EVENT REPORT

THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS

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OVERVIEW

On 29 June 2010, more than **215 people** gathered at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Earth Charter, on the exact day and place where the Earth Charter was launched in 2000.



A particular feature was the possibility to follow the event live on the Dutch Earth Charter website: www.earthcharter.nl On this website, people could see and hear all the presentations. At the same time, several reporters were commenting and summarizing the main points discussed, using twitter. With this possibility **606 people from 43 different** countries such as India, Indonesia, Kenya Nigeria, Brazil, USA, Spain and Bulgaria were able to join the event online.

The event was convened and hosted by *Ruud Lubbers*, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands and Earth Charter Commissioner. The day plenary sessions were moderated by *Paul Hohnen* and *Ama van Dantzig*.

The **objective of this event** was to review the achievements and challenges of the last ten years of the Earth Charter Initiative, focusing on the youth and businesses. It was clarified that this was a “*decision finding meeting*”, therefore no decisions were going to be explicitly made during the event. The idea was to inspire and motivate participants to move forward with the need to put in practice the principles of the Earth Charter.

The event was organized in such a way to ensure interaction. There were four panel dialogues and five thematic sessions where participants had the opportunity to discuss and share their views. It counted with the participation of HRM Queen Beatrix in the morning and with the presence and speech by Prime Minister Balkenende late in the afternoon.

Manuel Obregon, Minister of Culture and Youth of the Republic of Costa Rica and renowned pianist, offered two performances during the morning programme, from his work called “**Symbiosis**”.



A live video coverage of a **children’s animation performance on the Earth Charter** was presented, both in the Peace Palace and in Uganda simultaneously. The Dutch performance was attended by *HRM Queen Beatrix*, who was handed one of the figures from the animation by the children.

MORNING SESSION

Ruud Lubbers made the introductory remarks and welcomed all participants. Then two members of Earth Charter Commission, *Pauline Tangiora* and *Awraham Soetendorp*, read the poem: *It Starts with One*.



The video [“It starts with One”](#) was presented. This was developed by the EC Communication Task Force in Brazil specifically in commemoration of the EC 10th anniversary. This video has been used to generate a viral expansion of the Earth Charter through TV channels and online media especially.

Panel presentations interspersed with table discussions and art performances. The following is a summary of the discussion panels.

[Video on the welcoming remarks.](#)

PANEL 1: PRESENTATION AND REVIEW OF 10 YEARS OF THE EARTH CHARTER

Panelists:

Mirian Vilela, ECI Executive Director;
Brendan Mackey, ECI Council Co-chair and Professor at the Australian University;
and
Jaana Laitinen, ECI Youth Facilitator.

Mirian Vilela highlighted the increasing number of people from all over the world and different walks of life that continues to feel inspired and empowered to use the Charter, finding ways to adapt it to their own work and local priorities. She clarified that the Earth Charter is a document and a movement and that the legitimacy of the document comes from the drafting process, the comprehensiveness and clarity the document and the growing movement.

Jaana Laitinen talked about the involvement of young people in the EC Initiative, sharing that thirty young people from all regions of the world were brought together specifically to this event, to discuss about how the young people can participate and get connected and be increasingly active. She shared that the youth representatives who were meeting there on the previous day considered that youth activism should be part of all EC Initiative areas of work. The youth don't wish to create a separate task force, but rather prefers to get involved with the existing fields of work. She briefly reported what the youth participants had discussed in the previous day informal session.

Brendan Mackey commented on how the EC has influenced the global governance processes and what is its role in these processes. He said that the Earth Charter was born as a soft law document, and it has been deliberately designed to be used by multiple sectors, and as an ethical framework for sustainability planning. It is important for the EC to get UN recognition to be able to get more involved with the UN global governance processes. He said that over the last 10 years there have been significant efforts to show the relevance of EC in climate change negotiations. And added that now, another priority is to make it relevant for Rio+20 process.

He concluded by sharing that there are three ways that the EC can contribute to international negotiations:

1. Nations are not using an ethical framework that includes universal responsibility during negotiations, so the EC can help them to embrace this principle.
2. It helps to understand that climate change is a symptom of deeper problems, and the EC helps to understand the real issues that need to be addressed.
3. It could help to bring the ethical dimension to different negotiations happening at the global scale.



PANEL 2: CREATING NEW WAYS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WITH CARE FOR THE GLOBAL COMMONS

Panelists:

Leonardo Boff, Earth Charter Commissioner

Anna Chojnacka, 1%Club and

Karen Armstrong, Charter of Compassion.

Karen Armstrong shared about the content of the [Charter of Compassion](#). In her opinion, we are not going to have a sustainable world, solve the environmental crisis and global division, if we are not compassionate with one another.

“Compassion is not about feeling sorry about others”, said *Armstrong*; “it means to put yourself in other people’s shoes, to look into your own heart, and to refuse to inflict pain on others”. The idea of the Charter of Compassion is to have a document that leads and inspire people to take action to practice compassion. The Charter of Compassion is complementary to the Earth Charter, but its emphasis is on people’s behaviour and relation with each others.

Leonardo Boff said that it is important to change the current vision most people have of the Earth – considering the earth as a box of resources which is not alive, and which we can use (and misuse) as we want. He affirmed that people continue to have wrong concepts of growth and development; because these are based on the premise that resources are infinite therefore we can continue to use them infinitely. As Einstein used to say “the problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them”. Here is where he sees the great value of the EC, because “we need a new start with new minds and hearts”.

Anna Chojnacka, who is also member of Worldconnectors, shared about the initiative called [1%club](#). This website is helping people, small groups or organizations who have a project idea, to come together, share their project proposals and ask for help – either with funding or other resources (knowledge, voluntary work, etc). *1% club* is working with the EC, to connect people who are inspired by the EC.

PANEL 3: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CITIZENSHIP

Panelists:

*Oscar Motomura, ECI Council Member;
Herman Wijffels, Worldconnectors Co-chair;
Carolina Wosiack, New Earth Leaders Programme.*

In this session, participants were asked to share their ideas regarding possibilities for the business sector to innovate towards sustainability, and how the private sector has been using the Earth Charter.

Oscar Motomura shared that his organization called Amana-key, offers short courses on management and sustainability that promotes individual accountability instead of corporate social responsibility. They use the Earth Charter as a tool to help people understand the interconnectedness between different dimensions of reality, and as a guide towards each participant’s journey to change their heart and mind.

As a result, many companies are putting in their mission a contribution to make a better world. “A better world is a vague concept; the Earth Charter helps to visualize and concretize it”, said *Motomura*.

Carolina Wosiack shared about her experience with the *Earth Leaders programme*, which is helping young leaders with tools to change the mindsets of CEOs and other business people, to focus on offering services that do not affect the environment. The Earth Charter can help them to understand the world in a holistic way.

Herman Wijffels said that the EC is a codification of an emerging global consciousness that feeds the 21st century. It brings relevant principles for businesses and governments, especially on the importance of the connections and interdependence between people and the environment. According to *Wijffels*, we are changing from an economy that is based on resources to one based on cycles, with an ethical and spiritual basis. That is a fundamental change at the heart and core of business in the future.

[Video of the Late Morning Session](#)

AFTERNOON SESSION

SUMMARY OF THEMATIC SESSIONS

The following are the topics and a brief summary of the discussions, reported by the session's moderators. [Find here a detailed report](#) for these thematic discussions. A [video](#) on participant's reaction on these sessions is also available.



- 1. CSR: New Earth Leaders and Earth Charter Cities:** In this session participants spoke about the Earth Charter city manifesto, and several examples of cities that have endorsed the Earth Charter and are working with it. Examples of the implementation of New Earth Leaders were also shared.
- 2. CSR: Water, Energy and Sustainable Development:** In this session there was some discussion comparing the Earth Charter and other initiatives such as Global Compact. The bottom-line is that the EC is the most extensive document for companies that seek inspiration on how to operate in today's world. Examples were given on how companies are already very active in the sustainability arena.
- 3. Diversity and Connecting Civilisations:** The emphasis of the session turned on the meaning of compassion. Examples were given on the actions of EC Task Force on Religion, Spirituality and Ethics. There were reflections on how to be more respectful to different cultures.
- 4. Innovation of International Cooperation with Use of New Media:** New media should be used to reach the heart, instead of arguments. We need to create platforms with inspirational solutions. Computers are used as digital libraries, with an old mindset and old content. The need to make more use of new media was stressed. "Can we get old AND new media to adopt EC as their code?"
- 5. Global Governance, the UN and Climate Change:** It was emphasized that key decisions and actions have to be done at the global level, in the political regime, which ultimately is intergovernmental; nothing much can be done or moved ahead without governments. This is not an easy arena to work with. Stronger Intergovernmental agreements must be reached; resulting in treaties / charters which have to be implemented. Civil society should help governments keep their promises.



PANEL 4: THE WAY FORWARD: ENGAGING BUSINESS AND YOUTH TO MAKE THE SHIFT TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Panelists:

*Yolanda Kakabadse, Earth Charter Commissioner,
Anne-Marie Rakhorst, Club of Rome,
Dumisani Nyoni, ECI Council Member,
Carla Moonen, senior advisor of PM Balkenende*



Yolanda Kakabadse recommended that emphasis should be made on decision makers, who are not necessarily in governments. “We should focus on creating systems in which we give decision makers the opportunity to shape their minds”. She also made the point that although the EC text is good for analysis, it’ll be important to simplify it, for example convert it into a song.

Anne-Marie Rakhorst suggested that successful business examples should be highlighted and spreading the word about them. It’ll be easier for others to follow a concrete example.

Carla Moonen, who has been working with governments, shared her experience working on collaborative projects. She shared an example of a project she worked on related to “Green business”. It is composed by 75 business leaders who meet regularly with her to share practical things to improve policy making.

Dumisani Nyoni responded to the question about how youth can get more involved in these processes. He said it is important to create spaces for intergenerational dialogue “find someone who is involved in a completely different field and talk!” According to him, the Earth Charter is not a complicated document to work with. On the contrary, he thinks that it simplifies the process to find solutions.

Following that panel, members of Damanhur community in Italy presented an act called “**Music of the Plants**”, which is basically an instrument that captures the energy the plants emits and transform it into sounds.

The Feather Project: Intergenerational sharing of wisdoms and dreams

[The Feather](#) is a social engagement project inspired by Chief Oren Lyons and Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp that is based on a set of Native American rituals, in which a 'talking feather' was handed to an elder by a group of young people who was then asked to share with the gathering the core truth of his/her life experience.

On stage were Awraham Soetendorp, Dmitry Savelau, Parvez Hassan, Putri Ayu Shalihah, Pauline Tangiora and Michael Slaby.



Awraham Soetendorp, shared a deep, personal message, speaking to Dmitry, from Belarus. Born in 1943, Soetendorp was miraculously saved from persecution in occupied Holland. He shared with Dmitry the value of life, peace and human dignity.

In response, Dimitry spoke out his dream that is very close to his heart: to see human rights and freedom of expression in Belarus. He passed on the feather to Parvez Hassan, who shared his lessons with Putri about the importance to keep dreaming because only dreamers can make changes happen and the need to "walk the talk!"

She passed the feather to Pauline, and shared her hope that there is respect to all. In her turn, Pauline passed the feather to Michael and offered her love and the love of the universe to him. Michael concluded the ceremony inviting all to join the Feather project.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants:
*Ruud Lubbers,
Kartikeya Sarabhai and
Mirian Vilela*

This joyful celebration of the EC was good, said *Ruud Lubbers* as concluding remarks. He added that "here for the first time we had a Minister who played the piano. We heard that governmental decisions will not do the job alone. Emotions and nature, these dimensions, play a vital role as well. The EC mission is the joyful celebration of life and embraces our connectedness to each other and nature."

Mirian Vilela said that the key ideas that she captured during the day was the need to work with the notion of intergenerational partnership and further promote that; that the Earth Charter and the effort of using it is actually not that complicated, it depends on each one creativity or capacity to adapt it to different contexts and



languages including the language of art through music and other artistic expressions. She could see that the involvement of the private sector is slowly growing specially when compared with what it was five years ago. She also highlighted that she heard during the day the need to collect good practices and stories that will serve as motivation and examples to others. She ended by raising the need to bring the EC to educational settings, formal and non formal, and the importance to promote instances of transformative education to pursue the mission of the Earth Charter. “We need to work more on the efforts to re-orientate education towards sustainability. This requires transformative education strategies to touch not only our minds, but also our hearts and souls. Hopefully we will continue to seek innovative ways to incorporate the EC in education.”

Kartikeya Sarabhai concluded by saying that there is a gap between where we want to go and the commitment needed to get there. It takes integrity to implement the values we endorse. The last ten years tools have been developed. We need now to realise that we are the missing a gap, not technology or money, our willingness to move to action towards sustainability. We only have to put it into practice, and the EC can help us to make that change.

SPEECH BY JAN PETER BALKENENDE, PRIME MINISTER OF THE NETHERLANDS

Summary:

“Being here and listening to you has been inspiring. We don’t need only policies, but also inspiration, if there is a new meeting, you need to begin with inspiration, it would be good to have all the heads of government visit a session on the Earth Charter”.

Prime Minister Balkenende agreed on what was said in a previous panel on the importance to “translate” the findings and new knowledge on sustainability to the language of decision makers. Also, that government, with the private sector and civil society should work together as governments cannot work alone.

“I strongly support this effort”, he said regarding the Earth Charter Initiative. “You have been talking about the principles of sustainability, and they are close to my heart. The term ‘community of life’ is an excellent concept.”

It is a great achievement that the EC is helping to move thousands or millions of people and cities towards sustainability, including The Hague. Balkenende mentioned that he sees the Earth Charter as a tree that started as a small seed and is growing. “I foresee that it will grow much further. Until its green leaves cover the whole earth....”

What do we need to do now? He reflected on the importance that young people are involved and are enthusiastic. “Their future is at stake so they have to be involved. It’s great that EC puts emphasis on youth and that they are taught to follow the path of sustainable business.”



The appeal of the EC to him is how its principles can be implemented in daily life. “It is not a matter of *Yes we can*, but *Yes we do*”. In this sense, the Dutch government has been putting some actions into practices, for example buying only sustainable products and services.

As final statement, Balkenende urged youth to take action: “you’re ready to start! It is a moral obligation.”

[Video on the Afternoon Session and Prime Minister speech.](#)