

**The Earth Charter Launch  
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Thank you very much your Excellencies and friends. This is supposed to be a reflection, so I will try to make it a reflection. It's a stopping point in a very long path, a very long journey, that we took a long time ago, some of us started over 30 years ago, and we continue to walk. We want to appreciate all the people we met along this path, along this journey, and I want to share with you something that for me is very practical, and it reminds me of a story of Jesus.

When Jesus was teaching, you know, he went around teaching, and he said a lot of things, and one day he was confronted by a very devoted follower who said, *what is the most important commandment; of all you have said, what is the most important?* And Jesus told him: *love your neighbor as yourself.* This person said: *and who is my neighbor, Teacher?*

So, sometimes I feel that, I don't know what Jesus thought, but after you've been talking for so long, and you have said all these wonderful words and somebody comes and says: who is my neighbor? But Jesus did not give up, He went and said: *"well, your neighbors are those who are in need"*. So, is not literally the person who lives next to you, and for many of you and for many of us who have been working in this journey. Our neighbor is everybody, and everything that lives on this planet. That is encapsulated in the last paragraph of the Earth Charter.

When I was looking at the last paragraph and I was reflecting on it, I picked several words, and if you take those words and scan your horizon of life, you can almost see the thousands and thousands of words that Steven Rockefeller most have heard and the Commission most have heard in order to come up with these very few words. So as to make them meaningful, we need to reflect on them.

So, for example, when you pick the word "just", we want a just world. Can we think of all the injustices that we have on this planet? whether they are injustices against our own species, against one and another, or whether there are injustices against the other forms of life. And if you can, start with your own neighborhood, and go as far as you can, before you get back to your place, you would see all the injustices that need, that word "**just**". I am sure that many communities and many individuals must have written letters to the Commission to say: you must include the word "just" because we need justice.

I look at the word "sustainable", I looked at the word "peaceful", I looked at the words "global interdependence"; one that made me feel that we are truly interdependent. Do we use these words because they are beautiful words, they are used often, or do we truly feel interdependent?

Do we really feel that we need the people in the south? Do we really feel that we need the biological diversity in the south? Do we really feel that we need the diversity of cultures in other parts of the world? Or are we only concerned about the cultures that we know of, and we are only going to tolerate the culture that we know of and we do not want to hear about other rather simplistic, primitive, backward cultures that you see on the films, on television.

I looked at the term “shared responsibility” in order to answer my question: Is there really anything to be shared like “responsibility”. The question is: whether we really feel that it is our concern when some people are dying of hunger in some parts of the world. Whether we have a concern when we hear that some countries are indebted to the point that they can not provide their citizens with the basic necessities, because they have to pay debts over what they borrowed.

I looked at the words “human family” and I thought: you know, we talk about it, it is necessary to protect the butterflies, it is necessary to protect the yet undiscovered species in the Amazon and other tropical forests, but we are not concerned about the diversity within the human family and I wondered whether we really know what that word “human family” means.

Is it my own family, my own nation, my own region? So, I am reflecting, and as you can see, there is not enough time for us to reflect on everything. ***There are enormous thoughts provoking words in this document - the Earth Charter - and what we should do is instead of just reading through, reflect on what the words mean, so that we can be moved to action.*** In other parts of the world and in my own life, I love it because I can talk, I can reflect, and at the end, I can go home, dig a hole and plant a tree. So when you go home that is something everybody can do, dig a hole and plant a tree. Thank you very much.