



# The Earth Charter and Religion

Toward an ECI Program on  
Religion and Sustainability

**STRATEGY DISCUSSION PAPER**

2 April 2007

Produced by

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## Summary

*ECI intends to develop a "Programme on Religion and Sustainability". Based on interviews with leading experts and a strategic review of needs and opportunities in the area of religion and sustainable development, we propose to put our initial focus on the development of very high-quality educational and training materials, targeted to religious audiences. These materials would include briefings for religious leaders, interpreting current research and trends on issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, global poverty alleviation through the lens of the Earth Charter's unifying ethical vision. The materials would be developed and disseminated in partnership with other secular organizations (such as the Stockholm Environment Institute and the UN-mandated University for Peace) and inter-religious institutions like the Forum on Religion and Ecology. They would also provide the base for a future expanded program that would include more actively facilitating greater inter-religious collaboration in pursuit of common goals for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. The paper includes an historical timeline on the interactions between the Earth Charter and religious sector.*

***ECI seeks feedback and comments on this strategy paper. Please address comments to Michael Slaby, Inter-Faith Coordinator, MSlaby@EarthCharter.org.***

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, peaceful and sustainable global society in the 21st century. Created by an extensive international consultation process during the 1990s, it was launched in 2000 and has since been endorsed by over 2,500 organizations and institutions, including UNESCO and the World Conservation Union - IUCN. The document serves as both a unifying ethical frame of reference, and as the inspiration for a broad global network of education and action programs, collectively known as the Earth Charter Initiative.

Earth Charter International (ECI) is the coordinating secretariat for the global Earth Charter Initiative. It is an international organization currently operating out of two regional Centers, one in Stockholm, Sweden (Center for Strategy and Communication), and the other in Costa Rica (Center for Education for Sustainable Development at UPEACE). The latter is collecting and preparing educational materials on the Earth Charter and sustainable development and working as a partner with UNESCO in support of the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development.

In overseeing the drafting process, the Earth Charter Commission was concerned that the Earth Charter

include articulation of widely shared spiritual values as well as fundamental ethical values. Religious leaders from diverse traditions and scholars in the field of religion participated in the consultation and drafting process, and the text of the Charter reflects many of their concerns and contributions.

Important input came from a series of ten major conferences on Religions of the World and Ecology that were held at the Harvard Divinity School Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) from May 1996 to July 1998. In these conferences, some 800 scholars and activists from around the world explored the potential of the world's religions to contribute to the crucial effort of revisioning human-Earth relations. The conferences played a central role in distilling a consensus on several key elements of a global environmental ethics that were included into the Earth Charter.

Among the values affirmed in the Earth Charter that are consistent with important principles promoted by the world's religions are the following: The Earth Charter emphasizes that "when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more." It calls for reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, humility, universal

responsibility, compassion, love, justice, non-violence and peace. Using a phrase found in international law, it states that "the protection of Earth's vitality, diversity and beauty is a sacred trust." In addition, the first two principles in the Earth Charter call for respect and care for the community of life, which is based on the notion that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings. These ideas and values are supported by the teachings in many of the world's religious traditions.

In November 2005, the Earth Charter Initiative celebrated the fifth anniversary of the document's completion and launch, and began a new, action-oriented phase in its work. In this new phase, ECI seeks to strengthen active engagement with religious communities and faith-based organizations, and it has pursued a variety of avenues to explore new strategic approaches, including a dialogue among an *ad hoc* working group comprised of ECI Council Members, Advisors, Affiliates and Commissioners; historical research into the Earth Charter archives; and interviews with key persons working in international organizations such as UNESCO and UNEP.

### **THE NEED: HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION MATERIALS PREPARED SPECIALLY FOR RELIGIOUS AUDIENCES**

In recent years, more and more conferences and initiatives have taken up the challenge of fostering the active participation of the world's religions in the struggle towards environmental protection, human rights and the eradication of poverty. For example, more than 800 religious leaders discussed issues of conflict transformation, peace-building and sustainable development at the 8<sup>th</sup> World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto (August 21 to 25, 2006). From November 7 to 8, 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway brought together representatives of religious organizations, secular development agencies and researchers to discuss global concerns at a conference on "Religion, the Environment and Development: The Potential for Partnership?"

Both meetings brought to light a shared concern for the *ethical dimension of sustainable development* — that is, the values and attitudes that shape our

behaviour towards Earth and one another. However, the conferences also brought to light the need for an intensified inter- and intra-religious debate about how religious organizations could meaningfully participate in the discourses on environment and development. In this regard, it was stressed that more case studies, success stories and research programmes are needed to increase the level of knowledge in this field.

On a very similar note, personal interviews with leading representatives of major international inter-religious organizations indicated that *high-quality and up-to-date educational materials are needed* to provide religious communities with the needed background information, guidelines and practical approaches for attaining justice, sustainability and peace, especially on global challenges such as global warming, biodiversity loss, poverty eradication and sustainable living.

Especially in the current context, where the international community - including a growing number of faith-based organizations and religious communities - is waking up to the challenge of climate change, such materials are needed more than ever. Furthermore, interviewees stressed the great need for classroom materials on these topics especially designed for religious learning institutions, seminaries and schools.

### **PROPOSED PROGRAMMATIC APPROACH**

ECI is ideally positioned to play an important role in helping religious communities to engage more actively in the movement for a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world, and to collaborate more effectively toward common goals. Moreover, the needs expressed by the assemblies of leaders and interviewees mentioned above exactly match the ECI's core competencies and experience, as well as the newly defined vision of its International Council.

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***Case studies, success stories, and other educational materials are needed to increase the level of knowledge among religious leaders and empower their participation***

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Over the next two years, ECI envisions creating high quality communications and education materials and programs designed specifically for religious audiences. These materials and programs will promote a holistic and systematic way of understanding the fundamental challenges of our time. Building on both the best of current science and research, and the unifying ethical perspective (and historical legacy) of the Earth Charter, ECI's materials will provide critical information on these challenges to religious leaders and groups. The materials will interpret, in the sense of "translate", current knowledge and best practice into terms that religious audiences will find compelling, inspiring, and empowering.

In the production of the materials, ECI intends to draw on the experiences, competences and resources of a wide range of partner organizations such as the Forum on Religion and Ecology, which has solicited an extensive bibliography on religion and development that would provide a fruitful starting point for ECI's educational endeavours.

We hope that the materials will lay the ground for a mutually beneficial exchange and dialogue among the religious and secular institutions within the Earth Charter Initiative, where the learning will take place on both sides. We believe that religious institutions have much to bring into the dialogue, as nature-oriented worldviews, environmental ethics and moral and spiritual values will be crucial for the collaborative efforts the Earth Charter is calling for.

In line with our Council's vision, we envision implementing this program with a small but efficient organization that works in partnership with other institutions and organizations. Likely partners in this new inter-religious initiative would include the Forum on Religion and Ecology, UNESCO, the Stockholm Environment Institute, the IUCN, and the University for Peace, among others.

*We propose that the Earth Charter Programme on Religion and Sustainability will include the following specific elements:*

- **An online learning platform highlighting success-stories and best practices** focused on

how religious communities and faith-based organizations can play a vital role in implementing the global vision of justice, sustainability and peace. The web site would draw a link between the secular and the religious institutions within the Earth Charter Initiative, and would foster an inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral exchange of knowledge, information and experience. Actively building on existing initiatives in the field, the web site would help catalyzing ongoing activities, and infuse fresh energy into the effort of engaging religious and spiritual organizations in the global partnership for a sustainable future.

*Note: We would explore hosting this site on the IUCN learning portal, in partnership with the World Conservation Learning Network.*

- **An educational guidebook on religion and sustainable living.** This overview booklet would take the Earth Charter as its framework, but be intended for use by a wide and diverse religious audience, including religious congregations and communities, faith-based NGOs and inter-religious organizations and movements. The material and the structure would reflect the four pillars of the Earth Charter: Respect and Care for the Community of Life, Ecological Integrity, Social and Economic Justice, and Democracy, Non-violence and Peace. The guidebook would orient readers on key international processes such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), and provide guidance for contributing to such processes.

It would bring together basic background information, success-stories, best practices, and practical suggestions on how the Earth Charter can be used within religious communities, as well as in inter-religious collaborations, to foster reflection and dialogue on and commitment to global ethics and sustainable development. An important piece of the guidebook would be a short narrative on the religious contributions to the cross-cultural dialogue on global ethics that led to the writing of the Earth Charter.

- **The development of professional / educational briefing materials on specific global issues**, from the perspective of the Earth Charter's shared ethical vision, and with the needs of religious leaders as our editorial frame. We would be likely to partner with another well-regarded, research-based organization (such as the Stockholm Environment Institute) in developing such materials. Specific topics for which interest appears high in such briefing materials include climate change (where new scientific and economic information presented by the Stern review and the most recent UN report need to be translated for religious audiences as quickly as possible), biodiversity loss, global poverty, and addressing lifestyle issues. The briefing materials would give an overview on the existing networks, organizations and partnerships in the respective fields, and provide an annotated set of references to useful materials and literature.
- **A manual on the use of the Earth Charter in inter-religious dialogues and collaborations for peace and reconciliation**, drawing on the uses of the Earth Charter in peace negotiations and post-conflict situations, and responding to the need of deeper interreligious understanding and inter-civilizational dialogue, especially between Islam and the West. We believe that the framework of global ethics that the Earth Charter presents could bring some fresh energy into these important processes. In the development of this manual, we would seek to engage senior UN negotiators who have used the Earth Charter professionally, as well as other senior leaders in the field.
- **The development of specific classroom materials for teaching about religion and sustainable living**, drawing on the experiences of the Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development at UPEACE in developing specific teacher guides for educating the values and attitudes needed for making the transition to sustainability. Target groups for these materials would be teachers on religion

within both secular and religious schools and universities.

- **A commentary on the Earth Charter from the perspective of the major world religions**, written by respected leaders and scholars of the respective traditions, answering the questions how the vision and the values of the Earth Charter is anchored in their religious tradition, and how the adherents of their faith could respond to the call to action that the Earth Charter poses. This commentary would play a crucial role in exploring where the religions are in line with the ethics of sustainable development, and where further efforts need to be made in the formulation of new ecological theologies and environmental ethics. In the production of the commentary, ECI would build on its existing contacts to religious leaders and scholars.

#### **Additional Strategy Note:**

In developing these materials, we would explore specific approaches for different target groups and audiences, such as school curricula, universities, and religious seminaries, and make sure that nuances for different countries, languages and regions are included.

We would also use the process of developing these materials as a means of building new inter-religious relationships, and strengthening existing ones. Consultation meetings on the development of these materials will provide ECI the opportunity to convene small groups (sometimes as a part of other assemblies, sometimes independently) and build both further trust and competence as a facilitating convener of inter-religious dialogue processes.

#### **POTENTIAL PARTNERS, CHANNELS AND AUDIENCES**

The Earth Charter Initiative includes an extensive network of spiritual, religious and faith-based groups and organizations that have either formally endorsed or actively supported the Charter, including religious congregations such as the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the Anglican Church of South Africa, monastic orders such as the School Sisters of Notre

Dame, faith-based organizations such as Pax Christi USA and the Project Group on Church and Environment of the World Council of Churches, as well as Buddhist organizations such as Soka Gakkai International and Dharma Drum Mountain Buddhist Association. Many of the religious endorsers are among our most active partner organizations.

Clearly these organizations would be our first, best "test audience" for the development of our materials, including their cross-cultural applicability in languages such as Spanish, French, or Indonesian.

Another important channel would be the vibrant network of youth organizations that form the Earth Charter Youth Initiative (ECYI). The ECYI strives to forge global alliances among youth across geographic, cultural and religious boundaries, and would be a key partner in ensuring that our materials include an inter-generational perspective.

However, ECI's overarching strategy includes partnership with other, larger institutions to both support their ongoing work, and to extend our impact. This would especially be the case in our work with religious audiences.

*We would seek to partner with a variety of international secular and inter-religious institutions in the production and dissemination of our materials, including the following :*

**Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE):** The Forum arose out of the above mentioned conference series on Religion and Ecology at Harvard University and has taken on the conferences' legacy in bringing the world's major religions into conversations with relevant science, economics, education, and public policy. ECI would hope to build on its history of partnership with the Forum in grounding its programme on the extensive resources FORE has compiled in the book series and the online database that followed the conferences. FORE's resources present a summary and synthesis of over three decades of intensive research on religion and the environment, and we believe that translating some of these into educational materials would be crucial for the task of mainstreaming the important work FORE has started.

**World Conservation Union (IUCN):** As the world's largest and most important conservation network, the IUCN — whose global assembly endorsed the Earth Charter in 2004 — would be a critical partner in both the development and dissemination of materials on issues such as biodiversity, climate change and the protection of endangered species and ecosystems. ECI is already partnering with IUCN and other actors on a new Learning Consortium for Systems and Sustainability, and this programme could be linked to that larger initiative, and housed on the IUCN internet learning portal.

**United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):** In October 2003, the UNESCO General Conference recognized the Earth Charter as an important ethical framework for sustainable development, and expressed its intent to reinforce, in a practical way, the vision and principles of the Earth Charter in UNESCO programmes. ECI has already partnered successfully with UNESCO to promote the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). ECI's Programme on Religion and Sustainability would hope to build on this success, especially by supporting UNESCO's flagship programme of promoting inter-faith dialogue, and link this work to the DESD as well as an important form of non-formal education.

**University for Peace (UPEACE):** ECI has a strategic partnership with this UN Treaty Organization, based in Costa Rica. UPEACE is also host to the Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development. ECI could draw on UPEACE courses and curricula in developing briefing materials for religious leaders, particularly in the areas of peace, conflict resolution, and social justice. ECI could also partner with UPEACE in the development of training courses on the role of the world's religions in international security and the sustainable development movement.

**United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP):** UNEP is the voice for the environment in the United Nations system, and in North America, UNEP has established an Inter-faith Partnership for the Environment that organizes an annual Environmental Sabbath. In the course of almost 20 years, UNEP has distributed thousands of packets of materials for use in congregations throughout the United States and Canada. ECI's Programme on Religion and

Sustainability hopes to partner with UNEP in the production and dissemination of educational materials for religious audiences, supporting UNEP's continuing work with additional quality materials.

**Stockholm Environmental Institute (SEI):** SEI is a non-profit, independent research institute and think-tank specializing in sustainable development issues, with six offices worldwide. SEI is highly regarded as a source of factual information and integrated analysis, and ECI — as part of a working partnership the organizations are developing in Stockholm — would expect to draw on SEI's knowledge base and research community as a source of solid information for the materials it produces.

**Religions for Peace (formerly: World Conference on Religions and Peace, WCRP)**

Religions for Peace can be seen as the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's major religions dedicated to promoting peace. It is one of the very few inter-religious organizations that involves officially mandated representatives of religious institutions. Its primary aim and focus has been on conflict transformation and peace-building. Increasingly, however, the organization and its global network of national and regional councils of religious leaders are including global issues such as poverty and the environment.

ECI considers Religions for Peace an important partner in the production of the materials, and would have the needs of WCRP's membership in mind in developing its programme.

*Note: Not all of these potential partners have been formally approached by ECI. However, we believe that all would welcome this initiative and that most would actively collaborate, based on our previous interactions with them.*

**ANALYSIS OF CURRENT STRATEGIC ACTIVITY IN THE FIELD**

Fortunately, ECI is not alone in being well-positioned to reach out and build bridges between the sustainable development movement and religious

institutions. Nonetheless, this important field of activity appears to be under-populated, relative to both the need and the opportunity to catalyze greater action for a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. ECI clearly has a large strategic opportunity. Indeed, it might be more accurate to say that ECI has an *ethical responsibility* to reach out to this sector.

What follows is a brief analysis of current strategic activity in this field. The analysis is not meant to be comprehensive, but indicative.

**1. Global Inter-Faith Processes**

There are relatively few strong institutional actors whose strategic and programmatic focus is specifically on *empowering the religious and inter-faith community to get active on sustainable development*.

The strongest of these, **the Alliance of Religion and Conservation (ARC)** based in Bath, England, has an excellent track record of accomplishment and publication. At the same time, many of its materials are focused on a UK rather than global audience; and other strong international processes also suffer from a lack of good educational materials targeted to a religious audience. The international and inter-faith focus of the proposed ECI Programme on the Earth Charter and Religion would both complement what exists, and help to fill a large strategic gap.

**2. Global Single-Faith Processes**

By far the majority of activity in this area is being done by individual religious denominations, at the national level, running environmental programmes and doing on-the-ground action programmes. However, there are some important *ecumenical initiatives* to be mentioned that have a global outreach and promote dialogue and collaboration among different schools and denominations within their own faith.

The strongest of these is the **World Council of Churches (WCC)**, which plays an important role in encouraging its 340 member churches in over 100 countries to make commitments to justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

In Buddhism, the Thailand-based **International Network of Engaged Buddhism (INEB)** brings

together Buddhist leaders from different schools and serves as a think-tank for pressing social issues such as consumerism and violent conflict.

Concerning the Muslim community, an organization of note is the **Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences** (IFEES), which considers itself as perhaps the only internationally recognized body articulating the Islamic position on the environment and at the same time attempting to give practical help and guidance.

The ECI Programme would be designed so that materials produced could either be adopted and/or adapted by such single-faith networks and denominational groups.

### **3. Important National-Level Processes**

As mentioned above, national-level processes — those that reach across some religious boundaries, and those staying within a single denomination or tradition — are both dominant and prominent in this field of activity.

This is especially true of the United States: for example, the **National Religious Partnership for the Environment** has a long history of fostering exchange of information and experience among thousands of independent faith groups across a broad spectrum linking the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Council of Churches U.S.A., the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, and the Evangelical Environmental Network.

A very successful US denominational programme is the **Episcopal Power and Light Project** that helps members establish a clean energy programme among the 8,000 Episcopal churches nationwide. The programme was so successful that it developed into the **Interfaith Power and Light Project** reaching several hundred thousand houses of worship throughout the country.

Such stellar projects are, however, not spreading quickly beyond national boundaries. ECI would, through the communications and education efforts of the proposed Programme, work to accelerate the diffusion of successful models and programs across

boundaries of both faith and nation.

### **Conclusion: ECI Has Much to Contribute**

In the light of the current strategic activity in this field, ECI has much to offer to strengthen the ongoing processes, and promote a new, holistic and systematic way of understanding the fundamental challenges of our time that require cross-cultural and inter-religious dialogue and collaboration.

The decade-long process of writing the Charter involved organizations and individuals from all walks of life, including experts in the field of science, philosophy, ethics, religion, politics and international law. ECI, building on the legacy of the Earth Charter itself, has the unique strength to bring people together, across disciplines as well as across boundaries of cultural and religious difference, to build shared understanding and inspire commitment to building a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.

Since the launch of the Earth Charter document in 2000, several thousand civil society organizations, governmental institutions, local communities, youth organizations, universities, schools and other educational institutions have endorsed the Earth Charter's inclusive vision, implemented it in their specific fields of action, and fuelled their unique perspectives and wisdom into the ongoing dialogue about how to address the global challenges humanity is facing today.

For the past six years, the limited resources of the coordinating staff have mainly been directed into developing the educational use of the Earth Charter. This deepening well of experience — supported by the efforts of a growing international network of Earth Charter-allied educators and institutions, and ECI's recently strengthened partnerships with institutions such as UNESCO and IUCN — could be powerfully

aligned with a religious outreach strategy to promote the changes of attitudes, values and behaviour necessary to achieve sustainable development.

## LONGER-TERM STRATEGY

These initial stages proposed for the ECI Programme on Religion and Sustainability are seen as building a foundation for a long-term engagement with the religious sector. Future strategy will build on the goodwill, trust, and mutual appreciation that creating and spreading good educational materials and programs, in partnership, will bring.

We imagine ECI acting as an important co-convenor and facilitator, supporting the creation of stronger collaboration and deeper understanding among religious organizations seeking to contribute to a more just, sustainable and peaceful world. It is our hope that ECI's programmes and educational materials can assist religious communities in using their central role in the formulation of worldviews, rituals and ethics to guide human behaviour toward a caring treatment of the Earth and one another.

Moreover, we think that the dialogues and learning processes between religious and secular communities will be mutually beneficial, as religious leaders have much to offer to their secular co-workers, especially on how to maintain inspiration, hope and personal commitment, and how to practice the ethics of living simply and sustainably in one's everyday life. The centuries-old traditions preserved by the religions to evoke a sense of wonder and awe regarding the complexity, mystery and beauty of life itself will play a crucial role in the tasks that lie ahead of us.

The long-term focus of the proposed Programme on Religion and Sustainability is given by the Earth Charter document itself:

*"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 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."*

— *The Earth Charter, The Way Forward*

## Appendix 1

### The Earth Charter and Religion: A Timeline

- 1987** The World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) recommends the creation of a universal declaration on environmental protection and sustainable development in the form of “a new charter.”
- 1989** Various religious organizations begin consultations with the goal of formulating recommendations for the proposed Earth Charter, which is to be drafted at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992.
- After international consultations in which many religious leaders participated, Global Education Associates issues “The Earth Covenant,” which is signed by over 2 million people. The Earth Covenant influences the dialogue in civil society about an Earth Charter.
- 1991** The International Coordinating Committee on Religion and the Earth (ICCRE), which was founded by religious leaders involved in UNEP’s Environmental Sabbath Program, issues “An Earth Charter - A Spiritual Perspective” as a contribution to the UNCED Earth Charter initiative.
- “One Earth Community,” a declaration prepared by representatives of religious communities from around the world organized by “The Working Group of Religious Communities on UNCED,” and “In Our Hands,” a Southeast Asian declaration, are submitted during the UNCED preparatory process for the drafting of the Earth Charter.
- The World Conservation Union (IUCN) publishes its second World Conservation Strategy (WCS) in *Caring for the Earth; A Strategy for Sustainable Living*. The WCS is based on nine fundamental ethical principles. The first principle is “Respect and care for the community of life,” which has strong support in the teachings of many religious traditions
- 1992** The Rio Earth Summit (UNCED) adopts Agenda 21, but does not succeed in reaching agreement on an Earth Charter and adopts the Rio Declaration in its place.
- Maurice Strong, the Secretary General of UNCED, creates the Earth Council to promote Agenda 21 and the unfinished business of the Summit.
- 1993** The Parliament of the World’s Religions issues a “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic,” which is drafted under the leadership of Professor Hans Küng.
- 1994** A new Earth Charter Initiative is launched under the leadership of Maurice Strong, the secretary general of UNCED and chair of the Earth Council, and Mikhail Gorbachev, the president of Green Cross International.
- 1995** The Earth Council and Green Cross International begin worldwide consultations designed to develop a people’s Earth Charter.
- The Secretariat for the Earth Charter Initiative is established at the Earth Council in Costa Rica, under the management of Maximo Kalaw, Jr., the Executive Director of the Earth Council who chaired the NGO Forum at the Rio Earth Summit.
- The first international workshop on the Earth Charter is held at the Peace Palace in The Hague. Among the representatives from 30 nations are international law experts, government officials and religious leaders.

- 1996** An Earth Charter Advisory Group on the Religions is created. Advisory groups are also formed on specific religious traditions including Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.
- An Indigenous Peoples Program and Network are formed by the Earth Council in support of the Earth Charter consultation process, leading to formation of a Spiritual Consultative Council made up of spiritual leaders and elders.
- The Earth Charter Commission is formed in December under the leadership of Maurice Strong and Mikhail Gorbachev. Its 23 members represent the major regions of the world and include a great diversity of cultural and religious perspectives.
- The Commission appoints Steven Rockefeller, a professor of religion and ethics, to chair the drafting committee and authorizes the start of the drafting process.
- 1996-1998** Consultations on the Earth Charter are held at 14 conferences on the world's religions and ecology organized by Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim and The Center for the Study of World Religions at Harvard Divinity School.
- 1997** The first formal Earth Charter Drafting Committee meeting takes place in January and includes a careful review of contributions from religious leaders and organizations to the Earth Charter process that began in the late 1980's.
- Consultations on the Earth Charter, including discussions about religious values, are held during the Rio +5 Forum in Rio de Janeiro in March. At the conclusion of the Rio +5 Forum the Commission issues Earth Charter Benchmark Draft I.
- 1998-1999** World-wide, cross-cultural, inter-faith dialogue on values and principles for the Earth Charter continues.
- Earth Charter Benchmark Draft II is issued in April 1999.
- Three conferences on "Spirituality and Sustainability," organized by the Center for Respect of Life and Environment, are held in Assisi, Italy and give special attention to principles for the Earth Charter
- 1999** Consultations on the Earth Charter are held at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Cape Town, South Africa. Hans Küng and Steven Rockefeller have a public dialogue on the "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic" and The Earth Charter. The Earth Charter is presented at a plenary session of the Parliament and during this session a copy of Benchmark Draft II is presented to Nelson Mandela by Kamla Chowdhry, co-chair of the Commission, and Steven Rockefeller.
- 2000** The Commission issues a final version of the Earth Charter following a meeting at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris in March.
- The Earth Charter is officially launched at the Peace Palace in The Hague in June, beginning the Second Phase of the Earth Charter Initiative.
- Immediately following the launch, at its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary World Congress, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) endorses the Earth Charter in the historic Schlosskirche in Lutherstadt Wittenberg where Martin Luther launched the Protestant Reformation with his 97 theses.
- The Commission transfers most decision-making authority to an Earth Charter Steering Committee. The Earth Charter Secretariat is affiliated with the University for Peace in Costa Rica and Mirian Vilela becomes director of the Secretariat.

- The Earth Charter is presented at the Millennium Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations, and many Earth Charter values are affirmed in the declaration issued by the Summit.
- 2000-2005** The Earth Charter is translated into over 30 languages. 2,400 organizations, including UNESCO and IUCN, endorse the Earth Charter. Among them are 220 religious organizations, including the Council of the Parliament of the World's Religions.
- 2001** An Earth Charter Advisory Group on Religion and Spirituality under the leadership of Kamla Chowdhry is created.
- 2002** A Roundtable on Religions is held at the Earth Dialogues in Lyon, France - "Globalization and Sustainable Development, Is Ethics the Missing Link?" - convened by Mikhail Gorbachev.
- Interreligious side event on the Earth Charter take place at Prep Com IV of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Bali.
- The exhibition "Seeds of Change: The Earth Charter and Human Potential" is displayed at the UBUNTU Village of the WSSD.
- 2003** A panel event "Science, Religion and Caring for the Environment: A Personal and Global Responsibility" is hosted by the Club of Budapest USA in partnership with the International Diplomacy Council.
- 2004** A panel on the Earth Charter, entitled "The Earth Charter: Shared Values for Building a Peaceful, Just and Sustainable Future" is held at the Parliament of the World's Religions in Barcelona, Spain.
- A side event on the Earth Charter takes place at the 2004 Forum of Cultures in cooperation with UNESCO Catalonia.
- 2005** The Steering Committee launches a strategic review of the Earth Charter Initiative culminating in an Earth Charter +5 Conference in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, in November that includes 400 Earth Charter leaders and supporters.
- During this conference a thematic session on "Faith Groups Engaging with the Earth Charter" is held.
- The Earth Charter In Action*, a collection of 62 essays by Earth Charter leaders, including several religious leaders, is published.
- 2006** Responsibility for oversight of the Earth Charter Initiative is transferred to a new Earth Charter International Council with 23 members representing the major regions of the world, and the year 2006 is declared as "Year of Transition" in the Earth Charter Initiative.
- Alan AtKisson is appointed director of the transition to the Third Phase and opens a new Earth Charter Center for Strategy and Communications in Stockholm.
- Mirian Vilela transforms the Earth Charter Center in UPEACE in Costa Rica into an Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development.
- Michael Slaby is appointed to coordinate a new Earth Charter initiative with the religions.
- 2007** The impact of the Earth Charter in the areas of social corporate responsibility, education for sustainable development and youth empowerment is increased.
- The International Experts's Workshop on Faith-Based Organizations and Education for Sustainable Development, organized by UNESCO Catalonia, is held in Barcelona from March 22 to 24. The core elements of the Earth Charter Programme on Religion and Sustainability are presented by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Michael Slaby, and are widely applauded by the audience.

## Appendix 2

### Principal Sources Consulted in the Development of this Strategy

Informal Inter-faith Planning Session at Earth Charter International Council Meeting, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2006

Summary Paper: "Religion, the Environment and Development: The Potential for Partnership"

Impressions of 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of Religions for Peace in Kyoto by Katherine Marshall

Website of the Forum on Religion and Ecology, URL:

[www.environment.harvard.edu/religion](http://www.environment.harvard.edu/religion)

Personal Interviews with:

*Emily Chou*, Research Associate, Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions

*Rick Clugston*, Executive Director, Center for Respect for Life and the Environment of the Humane Society of the United States

*Grove Harris*, Managing Director, Pluralism Project, Harvard University

*Jim Kenney*, Editor, Interreligious Insights and Executive Director, Interreligious Engagement Project

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