

# PHILADELPHIA AREA GEORGISTS PARTICIPATE IN EARTH CHARTER SUMMIT

by Alanna Hartzok, Scotland, PA

The Earth Charter - a worldwide "people's treaty" - affirms that humanity's environmental, economic, social, cultural, ethical and spiritual lives and hopes are all interconnected. It seeks to inspire in all people a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family, the community of other life, and future generations.

Part of the unfinished business of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the Earth Charter drafting process was revitalized in 1994 by Mikhail Gorbachev, president of Green Cross International, and Maurice Strong, Earth Charter secretary general. Steering committee co-chairs were Steven Rockefeller (USA), Kamia Chowdhry (India), Yolanda Kakabadse (Ecuador), and Ruud Lubbers (The Netherlands). In a grassroots drafting process of more 12 years, thousands of people in 56 countries gathered in cities, villages, meeting halls, schools and in open air settings to weave the Earth Charter from their shared dreams for a better world.

Among the goals of the Earth Charter are to gather together people from all walks of life across the United States for political, social, economic and environmental reform at the local level using the Earth Charter principles as a guide; to encourage and engage youth to contribute their ideas and energy; to create working partnerships with at least 100 national and local grassroots groups and organizations; and to distribute a national resource manual describing and listing creative initiatives already using the principles of the Earth Charter.

The historic launch of the Earth Charter in the United States was held simultaneously in 12 cities connected via satellite on September 29, 2001. Concurrent celebrations in Honolulu, San Francisco, Chicago, Seattle, Austin, Indianapolis, Boulder, CO, Portland, ME, Jackson, MS, and Philadelphia created awareness of the Earth Charter's 16 principles addressing peace, non-violence, social and economic justice, ecological integrity, and an overarching ethic of respect and care for the community of all life.

The inspirational day was filled with well-known speakers, including Danny Glover, David Korten, Steven Rockefeller, Hazel Henderson, and Jonathan Granoff, as well as panel presentations, discussion groups and entertainment.

Several Philadelphia area Georgists - Uda Bartholomew, Pat Lowe, Brian Cole, Jake Himmelstein and Alanna Hartzok - participated in the Earth Charter Summit in Philadelphia at Drexel University. They placed a quarter page section in the Summit program, hosted a literature table and contributed to the Social and Economic Justice working group. Both the Center for the Study of Economics and the Philadelphia Land Value Tax Coalition were listed as local co-sponsors of the event. They intend to participate in the follow-up workshop designed to boost the newly created coalitions and projects on Sunday, November 4.

The Earth Charter Initiative will seek endorsement of the Earth Charter by the United Nations General Assembly in 2002, the tenth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit.

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The following Section of the Earth Charter is of the most relevance to Georgists:

## III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.

a. Guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required.

b. Empower every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves.

c. Recognize the ignored, protect the vulnerable, serve those who suffer, and enable them to develop their capacities and to pursue their aspirations.

10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.

a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.

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## THE EARTH CHARTER - A Declaration of Interdependence.

"To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations."

From The Preamble of the Earth Charter: Declaration of Interdependence

## PREAMBLE

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together (continued on page 10)

to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

### **Earth, Our Home**

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. 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 Global Situation**

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous, but not inevitable.

### **The Challenges Ahead**

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.

### **Universal Responsibility**

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. 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. We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

<http://www.earthchartersummits.org/TheEarthCharter.htm>

(Alanna Hartzok is the NGO representative to the United Nations from the International Union for Land Value Taxation. She may be emailed at [earthrts@pa.net](mailto:earthrts@pa.net).)