



# International Montessori Adolescent Summit

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## The Earth Charter

The Earth Charter was formally launched on June 29 2000, at the Peace Palace in The Hague, Netherlands. The Charter had been under development for over 13 years. Beginning in 1987, the world community was in agreement that a charter needed to be developed in order to lead the world into sustainable development. Sustainable development is the process of protecting natural systems while at the same time meeting human development goals. It was thought that the UN could possibly create a charter during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, many countries were not ready to accept sustainable development unequivocally.

With the aid of Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong, the idea of an Earth Charter was turned into a civil society program. Over the last 17 years, thousands of people and organizations have endorsed the charter and voluntarily worked towards defending its principles and ideals.

## Principles

### ***Respect Earth and life in all its diversity***

Gro Bruntland, the former prime minister of Norway once said, “All is indeed linked to everything else.” This is a simple message that is profound in how vast the Earth’s interconnectedness is. All things in the world have value regardless whether they aid human development or not. All living things have a role to play. This is true for all human communities as well and all humans deserve to be treated with respect.

### ***Care for the community of life with understanding compassion and love***

Humans must take responsibility for the Earth and our interactions with its resources. This does not mean humans must stop using resources. It means that when we exploit resources we need to think about the harm that is being done and how it can be minimized. We also must protect the rights of all people in relation to natural resources.

### ***Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful***

Democracy is a government system where all people have a voice in how the government works. All societies should allow people to reach their full potential. Furthermore, governments need to promote economic and social justice that is economically responsible.

### ***Secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations***

We all have the right to use the Earth’s resources. However, our use must be balanced with the needs of future generations. Just as past generations preserved the environment for our use and enjoyment we must pass on a stable and sustainable world. To accomplish this goal we must create systems to preserve natural systems now.

***Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life***

This principle works to stop environmental degradation and reverse what has already occurred. All future projects should include sustainable development plans. This means managing finite resources such as oil, natural gas, and coal and not exceeding the regenerative capabilities of resources such as wood, fish stocks, and water sources.

***Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach***

Human communities have a history of acting first and then solving the problems that occur. This principle attempts to turn this human trait around. It requires people who want to interact with the environment to prove that the activity will **not** be harmful instead of others having to prove that an activity is harmful.

***Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard's Earth's generative capacities, human rights, and community well-being***

This is something that many communities have been doing for a long time: reduce, reuse and recycle. Governments can help set up systems to improve these outcomes. Many people can do this work individually. In addition, access to health care will help people make responsible and safe decisions.

***Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired***

To meet the goals outlined, scientific study must be focused on improving environmental sustainability. Likewise, many traditional forms of interacting with the environment need to be strengthened and the knowledge respected. All information about the environment and human health should be public for the use of all humans.

***Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative***

Ironically, poverty is one of the causes of environmental degradation. As people struggle to survive they sometimes use resources without thinking about the environmental impact. Therefore, it is imperative all people are lifted out of poverty. This means access to drinkable water, clean air, food, healthy soil, shelter and sanitation.

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

Businesses should act in a way that supports sustainable development, environmental protection and the rights of workers. Their practices should also be public. Furthermore, developing countries should be helped by more developed countries to meet human development goals. They should also be forgiven large amounts of their debt.

***Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity***

Women and girls must be protected around the world. All women should have a voice in their community and should not be silenced merely because of their gender. Violence against women must stop. Furthermore, the family must be a place of love where all members receive support.

***Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities***

Discrimination in all its forms must end. All people have rights which cannot be taken away under any circumstances. Furthermore, indigenous people have special rights to the land and their beliefs and practices should be protected. Young people in all communities have a special role to play in creating sustainable societies.

***Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice***

All people should be consulted and informed about matters which relate to their environment. People should also have the right to speak out against things they disagree with and to compensation when their environment is harmed. All these things should occur at the local community level where they are more likely to be successful.

***Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life***

All people should have access to education which helps them be an active part of sustainable development. This means that all subjects in places of learning must deal with sustainable development from science classes to drama and visual arts to religion classes. Everything is connected – especially to sustainable development!

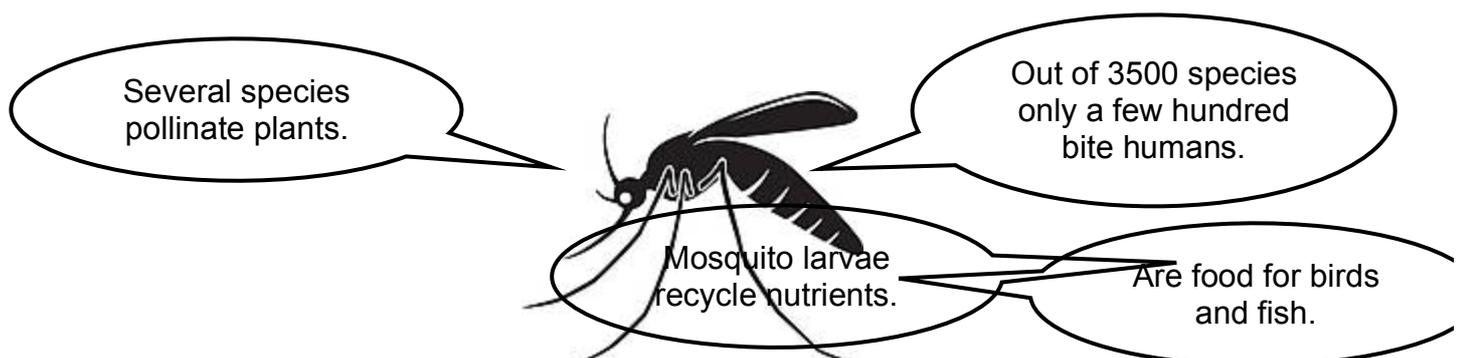
***Treat all living beings with respect and consideration***

Respect is not just something humans deserve. It is something that every living thing should receive for the basic fact that they are alive. Humans should strive to end cruelty to animals and work to make sure that no wild animals suffer needlessly due to human activity.

***Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace***

All human societies need to work together to create a culture of peace in the world. This means reducing the amount spent on the military and using this money for environmental projects. When there is conflict between nations or individuals, non-violent solutions must be sought.

## The Interconnectedness of the Mosquito



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## Guiding Questions

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1. Sustainable development stresses the interconnectedness of all things. Use your neighbourhood as an example. How does human development interact with the natural world? What are some of the positives and negatives of this interaction?
2. What are some practices that you see in your community which are sustainable for generations to come? What are the impacts on the long-term and short-term health of the environment?
3. All living things are deserving of respect. How can this ideal be rationalized with humanity's domestication of animals for companionship, labour, food and resources?
4. What are some of the root causes of environmental degradation? How can they be improved?
5. The Earth Charter identifies Indigenous people and young people as two special groups of people who have an important contribution to make. How is this true?
6. What are some of the main reasons many countries would find it difficult to accept the Earth Charter?
7. Use your school or a local business as an example. How would it adhere to the Earth Charter? How would it not measure up to its ideals?

## Resources

Title	Hyperlink	How is it helpful?
<b><i>The Earth Charter</i></b>	<a href="http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_english.pdf">http://earthcharter.org/invent/images/uploads/echarter_english.pdf</a>	The full text of the Earth Charter.
<b><i>Earth Charter Initiative</i></b>	<a href="http://earthcharter.org/">http://earthcharter.org/</a>	The official website of the initiative to put the Charter's ideas into practice.
<b><i>Everything is Connected</i></b>	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gro-brundtland/everything-is-connected_b_8154518.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gro-brundtland/everything-is-connected_b_8154518.html</a>	An article by Gro Brundtland about the progress humanity is making towards sustainable development.
<b><i>A World Without Mosquitoes</i></b>	<a href="http://www.nature.com/news/2010/100721/pdf/466432a.pdf">http://www.nature.com/news/2010/100721/pdf/466432a.pdf</a>	Article about the need for mosquitoes. Shows the pros and cons of eradicating the mosquito.
<b><i>Ethics &amp; the Earth Charter</i></b>	<a href="http://www.ikedacenter.org/thinkers-themes/themes/ethics/rockefeller-earth-charter-int">http://www.ikedacenter.org/thinkers-themes/themes/ethics/rockefeller-earth-charter-int</a>	An interview with one of the people who drafted the Earth Charter.
<b><i>Green Cross International</i></b>	<a href="http://www.gcint.org/">http://www.gcint.org/</a>	An NGO that is working to combat environmental degradation and other interconnected problems.
<b><i>Earth Council Alliance</i></b>	<a href="https://earthcouncilalliance.org/">https://earthcouncilalliance.org/</a>	An NGO that works to help improve sustainable development.
<b><i>Earth Charter Youth Toolkit</i></b>	<a href="https://earthcharter.org/virtual-library2/images/uploads/Earth%20Charter%20Youth%20Toolkit%202023-7-13.pdf">https://earthcharter.org/virtual-library2/images/uploads/Earth%20Charter%20Youth%20Toolkit%202023-7-13.pdf</a>	A booklet put together by the Earth Charter Initiative that helps youth become more involved in the process of sustainable development.
<b><i>Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform</i></b>	<a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/</a>	A UN site with information on sustainable development.