

## **Integrated Earth Charter Ethics: Two Substantive Approaches**

The Earth Charter articulates an inspiring vision, as well as basic values, and essential ethical principles for healthy earth community. Its commonly shared eco-justice imperatives for the 21<sup>st</sup> century are applicable everywhere at all three levels of moral agency—personal, institutional, and governmental. In the words of the drafting committee chair, “The objective is to give to the emerging global consciousness the spiritual depth—the soul—needed to build a just and peaceful world community and to protect the integrity of Earth’s ecological systems” (Rockefeller, 2001). The Charter’s concluding sentence anticipates our participation in “the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life” (Earth Charter 2000, Conclusion).

The Earth Charter’s holistic, layered principles present a moral ecology of crucial values to observe and necessary methods to follow in seeking truly sustainable development/community. They also provide an ethical standard for evaluating policies or practices that purport to build a sustainable, just, participatory, and peaceful world. Besides showing what sustainable living is all about—individually, institutionally, and collectively—the interactive imperatives stated in the Charter offer a coherent standard for evaluating global/local issues, business and professional codes of conduct, and plans to reform corporate or community habits.

### **Discerning the Earth Charter’s Spirit**

The Charter’s preamble and sixteen principles articulate a spirit of universal interdependence and human responsibility within earth community.

“...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 the Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the great community of life, and to future generations.” (Preamble, opening paragraph)

The second paragraph of the Preamble announces: “humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life.” This statement encourages us to see reality as “a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects” (Berry, 1994). The Preamble goes on to emphasize that “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 Preamble’s fifth paragraph enjoins us to “live with a sense of universal responsibility” and express “the spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life” animated by “reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.” The preamble concludes with a commitment to implement the Charter’s vision and values in a sustainable way of life.

The Earth Charter is trying to line out what Earth *as earth community* means for ethics and moral agency. In moral theory it means de-centering the sovereign human self and in practice it means re-doing the world created by that self ... (so as to) “reinvent industrial-technological civilization” (a phrase in an early draft of the Earth Charter). This primacy of Earth community for ethics – or a communitarian understanding of nature and society together, with the economy of Earth basic to all – is the new thrust (Rasmussen, 2004)

### **Focusing on the Charter’s Ethical Substance**

The Charter provides an integrated ethical framework to guide personal, community and institutional practices, and to inform choices among public policy options. Therefore, when utilizing it, we should consider and link principles in the Earth Charter’s four parts. That approach to ethical reflection affirms that “our environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual challenges are interconnected.” (Preamble, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph)

The Charter’s initial overarching principle, “Respect Earth and life in all its diversity,” affirms the interdependence and intrinsic worth of every kind. Such a post-anthropocentric posture moves beyond the Agenda 21 consensus reached at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, which was still preoccupied with the “use value” of natural resources. From that foundational first principle flow three more general principles that specify shared human obligations: (2) human responsibility for otherkind, i.e., “Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love;” (3) responsibility within and among human societies, i.e., “Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful;” and (4) responsibility for future as well as present generations, i.e., “Secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations.” We are obliged to care for and to conserve the community of life in all three spheres, sharing benefits and burdens for the sake of life and relationships—among people and with nature.

The four overarching principles of Part I are further developed in the twelve main principles (and the supporting principles) that comprise Earth Charter parts II – IV. Each ethical principle in this four-part tapestry is clarified or elaborated by supporting principles, many of which function as guidelines for implementing Earth Charter ethics. **My purpose below is to suggest how to utilize or “apply” these principles in an integrated way, by: A) paying attention to six Earth Charter emphases, and B) utilizing Charter principles effectively in issue-oriented ethical reflection.**

### **A. ATTENDING TO KEY EARTH CHARTER EMPHASES**

The Charter’s ethical imperatives cohere in six historically important emphases. Each thematic emphasis is anticipated in the Preamble and introduced in the overarching principles of Part I. Each thematic emphasis is then specified in a bright thread of ethical imperatives running through the tapestry of Parts II – IV. Focusing on these emphases helps us to gather, consider, and apply the Charter’s ethical substance more readily than might occur after merely reading in sequence the four foundational principles, twelve main principles, and sixty-one supporting principles. Keep in mind

that the six emphases of the Charter express basic requirements of, and pose some necessary limitations<sup>1</sup> to, sustainable living in earth community.

The following Charter emphases pose basic objectives, as well as evaluative questions to ask, of any human activity, institutional practice, or public (government) policy. E.g., for emphasis #3, what is the substance of human rights, and how does a particular human activity, institutional practice, or government policy advance, or negate, human rights? Similar questions emerge from the other emphases.

### **1. Caring for Diverse Life**

Interspecies justice is our moral objective in response to recognizing that “all beings are interdependent and every form of life has (intrinsic) value” (Principle 1,a). Humans should have “special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life” (5). So we are obliged to “make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives” (5,a); to “ensure that decision making addresses the cumulative, long-term, indirect, long distance, and global consequences of human activities” (6,c); to “protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance” (12,d); to “treat all living beings with respect and consideration” (15); and to “eliminate nuclear, biological and toxic weapons” (16,d).

### **2. Protecting Ecological Health**

Caring for everykind and preserving ecological integrity require application of the Precautionary Principle, or “a precautionary approach” (see Principle 6). All who utilize natural resources have “the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people” (2,a), and we have a common responsibility to take action to prevent pollution or eco-destruction. Earth Charter principles 5, 6, and 8, with their sub-principles, specify how to protect ecological health.

Principles 7,a-c) affirmatively require the three R’s (reduce, reuse, and recycle), mandate energy conservation and efficiency, and require that environmental and social costs of goods and services be internalized. Principles in Part III of the Charter call for protection of human environmental rights (9,a), as well as fair trade and transparent economic activity for the common good (10,c,d). Principle 13,d in Part IV underscores the importance of “judicial procedures, including remedies and redress for environmental harm and the threat of such harm.”

### **3. Advancing Human Rights (procedural and substantial)**

Participatory justice is the objective articulated in Principles 1.b; 3.a-b; 13, for without human rights and fundamental freedoms strengthened by democratic institutions and government accountability, human potential is stunted and human dignity is denied. The Charter enjoins us to “recognize that freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations“ (4,a).

Requirements of intra-generational justice include protecting the commons (discussed under emphasis #2 above) and guaranteeing “the right to potable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required” (9,a).

Other substantial human rights articulated in the Charter include environmentally sound technology transfers (7.c), keeping environmental and genetic research in the public domain (8.c), paying special attention to the ignored and vulnerable (9.c), “promoting the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations” (10.a), relieving the international debt of poor nations (10.b), eliminating all forms of discrimination (12.a), and securing gender equality and related human rights for women and girls (11). Charter principles 1.a; 2.a; and 6.a also specify necessary limitations to human rights for the well-being of Earth community.

#### **4. Developing Sustainable Livelihoods**

Fostering sustainable livelihoods that provide material sufficiency (not excess or mere economic growth) is an important aspect of social and economic justice. The objective is to enable all “to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible” (3.b). The specifics include: sustainable management and trade of renewable resources (5,e & 10,c), “internalizing the full environmental and social costs of good and services in the selling price” of products (7,d), “empowering every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and providing social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves” 9,b), while also guaranteeing active and egalitarian participation of women (11), advocating for indigenous peoples (12,b), and caring for the environment at every level of government (13,f).

Principles 4.a and 7.d, e, f give us criteria or guidelines for living within limits.

#### **5. Making Peace In and Between Nations**

A crucial objective stated in principles #3 of the Charter is to build “just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful societies.” Specific aspects of peacemaking are to inculcate “values, traditions, and institutions that support earth community’s flourishing (4,b); to “avoid military activities damaging to the environment” (6,e), to respond to the needs of vulnerable, suffering and ignored groups (9,c), and to “promote a culture of tolerance, non-violence, and peace” (16). The concluding sub-principles under #16 specify strategies for peacemaking, and the last sub-principle defines peace in terms of relational wholeness. The other Earth Charter emphasizes state conditions for peace, while paragraph 5 of the Preamble anticipates shared responsibility for peacemaking.

#### **6. Educating and Acting for Long-Term Flourishing**

Educating and acting for the long-term common good and trans-generational flourishing are the objectives of Principles 2.b; 4.a-b; 6.c; 8; 12.d; 14. In turn these principles affirm that increased knowledge and power bring increased human responsibility to promote the common good, underscore “the needs of future generations,” express deep concern for the long-term consequences of human activities, support “scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, with special attention to the needs of developing nations,” advocate initiatives to “protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and

spiritual significance,” as well as teaching the “knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.” The Way Forward frames this emphasis.

The six interrelated emphases of the Earth Charter show clearly its moral commitments or leading edge. Caring for diverse life, protecting ecological health, advancing human rights, developing sustainable livelihoods, making peace in and between nations, and educating and acting for long-term flourishing are the substantial themes of education and action for a sustainable way of life “founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” (Preamble, 4<sup>th</sup> sentence)

## **B. UTILIZING CHARTER PRINCIPLES IN ISSUE-ORIENTED ETHICS**

Now let’s look at a second substantive approach to integrated Earth Charter ethics. Below, I will illustrate, only suggestively, how to make integrated use of Earth Charter principles in ethical reflection on three prominent contemporary issues: destructive economic integration, loss of biologically diverse habitat, and close confinement of animals. My discussion assumes that readers have some awareness of the issue, emphasizes how the global/local issue looks to an informed U.S. citizen such as myself, and then points to imperatives stated in the Earth Charter that illumine the problem and help to shape a constructive response.

### **Destructive Economic Integration**

The freighted process of economic globalization has produced several positive effects such as rising GDPs, more communication across cultures, greater life expectancy, and some movement toward democracy. Yet, “while the statistical proportions of per capita income, food supply, access to health services, potable water, and so on have all improved, the actual number of people who are poor, hungry, sick, and without drinkable water has never been higher” (Martin-Schramm, 1996, 133). Growing numbers of people are being diminished and impoverished by—not just left out of—the globalized economy that now systematically widens the rich-poor gap while vitiating basic rights of labor and degrading the environment.

The rich in every society benefit inordinately, at the expense of low-income citizens as well as ecosystems, from patterns of economic integration and resource exploitation that at the same time degrade land, water, forests, and fisheries, while piling up both external financial debts and internal social debts. Such a destructive pattern of economic integration is generated by a lethal combination of neo-liberal economic ideology, dominant transnational corporations, unfair trade agreements, harsh conditions set by international financial institutions, corrupt militarized governments, and wasteful consumption by the affluent.

By holding the preamble and principles of the Earth Charter in one hand and contemporary critiques of global economic integration in the other hand, our ethical reflection on this urgent issue comes alive. The Earth Charter speaks directly to destructive aspects of economic integration in foundational principle 3 (“promote social and economic justice”) and main principles 9-13 (each with a pertinent set of supporting principles). Those imperatives are: to “eradicate poverty as an ethical, social and environmental imperative,” to “ensure that economic activities and institutions at

all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner,” to “affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development,” to “uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being,” and to strengthen transparent democratic institutions at all levels and provide “accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.”

As an example of a contemporary critique of destructive economic integration, consider the message emanating from a World Council of Churches consultation in Buenos Aires, April 28-May 1, 2003. Consultants gathered there by the WCC, to assess and to address the impact of global economic integration on Latin America and the Caribbean, rejected the projected Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and called for a healthier kind of international integration based on human rights and stewardship of creation. The WCC consultation message also warned against “militarization” of the region by the United States (compare E.C. principle 16c), and it demanded the abolition of “immoral, impossible and never-ending” foreign debt imposed by international financial institutions on poor countries, to the neglect of people’s needs for health care, food, education, land, work, and housing. Earth Charter principles 10b (calling for technical resource sharing and international debt relief) and 9a-c (on eradicating poverty) articulate imperatives that are remarkably consistent with the message from church and community groups gathered in Argentina by the WCC.

The Earth Charter actually expresses a positive alternative to destructive economic integration. This emerges in the Charter’s concern for “sustainable livelihoods” – i.e., “a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible” (3,b). This concept is spelled out in E.C. principle 7f (urging lifestyles of “material sufficiency in a finite world”), principle 9b (on “education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood”), and principle 11b (calling for equal and “active participation by women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life”).

Finally, it is crucial to “ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labor standards” (principle 10,c). Sustainable livelihoods are severely threatened not only by crushing foreign debt that poor countries are forced to pay down by exporting commodities, but sustainable livelihoods are also undermined by global economic activity to exploit resources and cheap labor. For example, large producers and traders of commodities from developed countries often overwhelm people who farm traditionally for family survival. According to the Minneapolis Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, American corn subsidized by the U.S. government and protected by tariffs sells in Mexico for 20% less than it costs to produce, undermining the ability of small Mexican farmers to make a living from their crops. “Agricultural subsidies, which rob developing countries of the ability to export crops, have become the most important dispute at the W.T.O.

Wealthy countries do far more harm to poor nations with these subsidies than they do good with foreign aid” (Rosenberg 2003). Such policies continue, despite mass protests by Campesinos in Mexico City (and in other developing countries) demanding a new approach that helps small farmers instead of driving them off the land into already crowded cities. The problem in Mexico is intensified by its government’s preoccupation with emulating mega-farm “efficiency” while neglecting the countryside. “Mexicans fleeing the countryside are flocking to Houston and swelling Mexico’s

cities, already congested with the poor and unemployed. If Washington wants to reduce Mexico's immigration to the United States, ending subsidies for agribusiness would be far more effective than beefing up the border patrol" (Ibid.).

### **Loss of Biologically Diverse Habitat**

Jane Elder, a specialist in environmental policy, invokes at least two of the Earth Charter themes highlighted earlier in section A of this essay when she writes, "A sustainable future for humans and for the living Earth will need to address questions of equity, justice, compassion, and choices between near-term human and biological needs. These ethical issues and questions are being forced by the scale, complexity, and urgency of the problems we face related to biodiversity. "(Elder 2002: 19) Problems of biodiversity conservation are especially difficult because they demand alternatives to prevailing patterns of techno-economic development, and require public-private, often transnational cooperation to care for habitats on a variety of landscapes and waters.

Even before the most devastating effects of intensifying global warming were fully understood and factored in, it was estimated that one out of every eight of the world's myriad bird species faces extinction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Rapid biodiversity loss of this magnitude challenges the assumption that it is legitimate for humans to reshape the world for self-benefit through business as usual -- "free" enterprise, unregulated hunting, exploitation of oil and natural gas, chemical pollution, urban sprawl, industrial genetically-modified agriculture, installing tall cell-phone towers and wind turbines.

The healthy alternative, which is to proactively conserve biodiversity, arises from scientific and aesthetic appreciation of crucial nonsubstitutable animal habitats. **Here I focus on important bird areas (IBAs)**; when they are significantly compromised or destroyed, the bird species that depend on those habitats also disappear. To protect crucial habitats for winged animals depends on steadily coordinating a range of conservation efforts as the 1992 Convention of Biodiversity envisioned – to the benefit of otherkind with humankind. "The actions needed to ensure a secure future of birds are the very same ones needed to achieve a sustainable human future: preserving and revitalizing ecosystems, cleaning up polluted areas, reducing the use of harmful pesticides and other chemicals, reversing global climate change, stemming the spread of exotic species, and so on. Wildlife conservation must be worked into and be compatible with rural, suburban, and urban planning efforts that improve the prospects for the world's poor while making our cities and industries safer for all living beings." (Youth 2003: 49)

The Earth Charter speaks with moral passion and practicality to the urgent need for biodiversity conservation. Foundational principles 1a and 2a affirm (in a complementary way) the intrinsic worth of diverse beings including winged animals, and the responsibility of property owners not to harm the ecological commons. Foundational principle 4 and its supporting principles a & b underscore the imperative for humans to preserve winged beauty (along with many other stunning animal and plant species) for future generations by living in ways that support long-term ecological flourishing. Principles 5a-f articulate practical ethical guidelines specifying how to preserve "biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life."

Supporting principle 6c focuses on addressing the "cumulative long-term, indirect, long distance and global consequences of human activities" that are having

such devastating effects on IBAs and on transnational migratory flyways. Principles 7b & c underscore the importance of adopting renewable energy sources and related technologies (e.g., in communications towers, forestry, and biofuel agriculture) that will not ensnare, dislocate, or poison birds. Principles 8a & b also emphasize the need to support international scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, even as we learn from indigenous wisdom about conserving bird habitats (also see 12b). Such expressions of responsibility to preserve biodiversity benefit not only affluent ecotourists and future generations, but also poor citizens of developing countries where many important bird areas are located but where conservation programs lack funding or clout. Principle 10b points to the importance of helping debtor nations to acquire the institutionalized expertise to maintain ecological health and to preserve endangered habitats while developing, utilizing such mechanisms as debt-for-land reserve swaps.

To achieve widespread habitat protection, the ethical imperatives articulated in the whole of principles 12 (re democratic participation) and 13 (re education and the media) come into play. Otherwise, without enough knowledge and effective stewardship, “the land mourns and all who live in it languish together with the wild animals and the birds of the air.” (Hosea 4:3)

### **Close Confinement of Animals**

The Earth Charter’s initial imperative is to “respect Earth and life in all its diversity” and its first supporting principle is to “recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings” (1,a). Building on this ethical foundation, E.C. principle 15, and its supporting principles of animal protection, breaks new ground, compared to other global ethics statements, by enjoining us to “treat all living beings with respect and consideration”. What we do to implement this imperative and how we link it with other aspects of the Earth Charter will definitely express humaneness or lack of it toward animals, particularly those kept and slaughtered for food.

In an essay on “Animal Liberation at 30,” Peter Singer observed that the changes the animal movement has brought about mean that every year millions fewer animals are forced to undergo painful procedures and slow deaths . . . These modest gains are dwarfed, however, by the huge increase in animals kept confined, some so tightly that they are unable to stretch their limbs or walk even a step or two, on America’s factory farms . . . [In 2002], ten billion birds and mammals were raised and killed for food in the United States alone . . . The overwhelming majority of these factory-reared animals now live their lives entirely indoors, never knowing fresh air, sunshine, or grass until they are trucked away to be slaughtered (Singer, 2003).

Five years later, in April, 2008, the Union of Concerned Scientists issued an important report. “CAFOs Uncovered: the Untold Costs of Confined Animal Feeding Operations.” It explains how CAFOs shift billions of dollars in environmental, health, and economic costs to taxpayers and communities. The report points to healthier and more efficient ways to produce the nation’s beef, pork, chicken, dairy and eggs. E.g.



hog hoop barns (open-air structures with curved roofs where hogs are allowed to “nest” in straw bedding) are healthier for animals and produce meat more beneficial to human consumers at close to the same price. The same is true of “smart pasture operations” for beef cattle. The report outlines a set of research and regulatory steps, coupled with reduced subsidies to rein in CAFOs

Meanwhile European nations have moved steadily toward providing better care for farmed animals—e.g., by mandating perches and nesting boxes for hens, humane treatment of veal calves, space for pregnant sows to turn around, etc. But the U.S. has lagged behind. The widening gap in animal welfare standards between the U.S. and Western Europe has had a particular cause. The source of this gap, Singer asserts -- following Robert Garner, author of *Political Animals* (St. Martins Press, 1998) -- is the far greater corrupting power of money in the American political process, compared to that of Britain. “Pay to play” makes it relatively easy for American agribusiness to block or to neutralize humane, environmentally healthier federal and state legislation. Animal protection advocates in the U.S. have achieved some success not by lobbying legislatures but by initiating citizen referenda to change state constitutions or, much more likely, by selective buying campaigns that focus attention on inhumane and unjust practices of suppliers of fast food corporations that dread consumer boycotts.

Given this profile of the dynamics of confined animal feeding operations, and the pathology of much current animal agriculture, what Earth Charter principles should receive prime attention in our ethical reflection? Obviously, the first foundational principle about respect for life in all its diversity, and the intrinsic value of every form of life (1a) is most pertinent. Next, bring to bear principle 15a: “Prevent cruelty to animals kept in human societies and protect them from suffering.” Then grapple with the pattern of corrupt politics that surrounds particular producer practices, such as factory-style chicken or hog farming, by pondering the implications of principles 13a, b, and e that have to do with strengthening democratic institutions. And because developing countries often try to emulate the big, rich-country factory farmers in their own food systems, an integrated ethical response should also utilize principles 7d and f—focusing on appropriate production and consumption patterns that would greatly alter if not abolish the close confinement of animals.

The hog “production” process can involve much less cruelty to these animals, while becoming less hazardous to the health of people living near poisonous animal waste lagoons resulting from these factory farms.<sup>2</sup> For the sake of both four-footed and two-footed beings, human “consumption” patterns ought to be shifting to include less pork (as well as other meat) and more direct human consumption of grain. To adopt a lifestyle of sufficiency that includes eating lower on the food chain would make quite a difference both to animals and to humans, especially when combined with citizen initiatives in politics and economic democracy. Otherwise, “. . . imperfect information, powerful interests, and a desire not to know disturbing facts [will continue to limit] the gains made by the animal movement” (Ibid., 26).

My brief discussion of these three global issues only begins to illustrate the promise and process of integrated ethical reflection informed by Earth Charter principles utilized as interactive imperatives for a sustainable way of life. In each of the above examples, I “read” the situation with the Charter in one hand and lively contemporary

issue analysis in the other. I drew from main principles and supporting principles in all four parts of the Earth Charter. And I pointed to fundamental changes needed as well as practical steps to take in that direction. Going on this path, we join a “global partnership to care for Earth and one another” (Preamble, 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph).

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<sup>1</sup> Bosselmann, K. 2004. "In Search of Global Law: The Significance of the Earth Charter." *Worldviews* 8:1, 69. Klaus Bosselman discusses a particular emphasis (human rights) "as the basis of, as well as limitation to, human welfare and existence." I propose that we think that way about all six Earth Charter emphases.

<sup>2</sup> For a more nuanced discussion, see Gary Comstock (1995).

1. **Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.**
2. **Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.**
3. **Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.**
4. **Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.**
5. **Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.**
6. **Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.**
7. **Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.**
8. **Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.**
9. **Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.**
10. **Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.**
11. **Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.**
12. **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.**
13. **Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.**
14. **Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.**
15. **Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.**
16. **Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.**