Discussion paper

How currently marginalised voices might best use ethical dialogue to shape the local, national and international development agendas

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Executive Summary

This report[2]:

• examines the nature of dialogue as a method of communication/decision-making and in particular the nature of ethical dialogue. Dialogue is that form of communication in which parties are expected to listen openly to the voices of other parties and to their reasons in a constructive manner and with a view to reaching a decision genuinely acceptable to all. Ethical dialogue is this process in regard both to the explicit discussion of ethical issues involved and to higher level discussion of ethical principles themselves.

• indicates a number of different ways in which dialogue/ethical dialogue can help the voices of the marginalized to be properly heard by other parties, and gives different accounts of why this should be so; but also recognises that in many ways the key issue is getting the parties to accept the use of dialogue as a method in the first place.

• emphasises the importance of the poor/marginalized seeking allies with each other in trans-societal solidarities and with 'outsiders' such as NGOs and sympathetic individuals (whether in private, academic, executive or administrative roles in the north), rather than 'going it alone'.

• emphasises that the effectiveness of dialogue at the local level partly depends on the acceptance of an appropriate global ethic – itself partly the product of dialogue and consensus-building (rather than the rejection of global ethics altogether) informing the international environment within which almost all local development efforts occur.

- recommends the Earth Charter as providing such a suitable global ethic, in contrast to other dominant global ethics in vogue at present (utilitarianism, libertarianism, internationalism and instrumental anthropocentrism).

1. Scene setting

Three assumptions are made:

(a) The interests of the poor/marginalised peoples are not met;

(b) This is partly because their interests are ignored or frustrated by others whose policies and actions determine their fate or because the intention to help often involves the imposition of inappropriate forms of development;

(c) One of the things that would help weaken these causes is the ethical empowerment of poor/marginalised peoples.

Three questions:

(a) what kind of ethic is likely to empower the poor/marginalised? Are they more likely to make headway in getting their voices heard (so that they are not ignored so much and so that what *they* think is appropriate to their (assisted) development is heard) if they stress the relativity of ethics (in the face of 'universalizing' western discourse) or the global-ness of an appropriate global ethic? Furthermore questions can be asked about the right *content* of an ethic.

(b) Who should be the advocates of an ethic that will empower poor/marginalised peoples? Briefly, is it important that poor/marginalised people do it themselves, either separately or in solidarity with other poor/marginalised people? Or is it important that allies are (like IIED) involved? How far can some people from some groups genuinely represent the interests of other people or groups?

(c) What kinds of process are appropriate to this empowerment? This issue here has partly to do with the central importance of dialogue or negotiation, but also relate to the techniques of dialogue (e.g. consensus-building) and to the processes surrounding the building of wide ethical consensus, for instance in publicly agreed documents like the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) or the *Earth Charter* (2000).

2. The basis of understanding the brief of this project

Marginalized voices is taken to refer to very poor people generally in the third world who are on the margins of development. This may be because of one or more of three factors:

- either because their plight is not attended to by other actors (such as national governments, aid agencies, international organisations or indeed business corporations) whose actions and policies could be modified to facilitate improvements – *passive marginalization* which is generally marginalization by indifference or neglect.

- or because their plight is actually caused by the policies and actions of other actors who oppress or discriminate against poor people for a variety of reasons (economic exploitation, oppression because groups are seen as 'other'/inferior such as indigenous people or minority ethnic groups) – active marginalization which is deliberate or intentional, so in short *deliberate active marginalization*.

- or because their plight is caused by the fact that other actors intervene in their affairs in inappropriate ways, imposing inappropriate development models and so on, not through oppression but through failure to hear the 'voices' of the marginalized i.e. the perspectives of

the poor themselves – this is another form of *active* marginalization but it is based a kind of deafness, so let us call this *active but well-intentional insensitive marginalization.*

Corresponding to these three forms of marginalization are three ways in which the marginalized's situation can be changed, namely if other actors (a) cease to oppress or discriminate, and/or (b) intervene in programmes which are properly sensitive to the perspectives of the marginalized.

Ethical dialogue has, it will be argued, an important role in respect to changing the attitudes (and hence the policies and actions) of other relevant actors in all three areas. In any case marginalization in practice is often a complex fusion of all three elements. The main focus will be on the third form of marginalization – marginalization caused by the failure to listen to what the poor themselves are saying. But the relevance or importance of ethical dialogue will emerge in all areas – particularly when one shows this in regard to national and international agenda-setting process, rather than at the local level.

Dialogue (quite generally not merely ethical dialogue) is a form of communication between different actors who need to come to some kind of agreement (normally on how to act in relation to each other, or on the values and norms which provide the basis for this). In a dialogic communication each party is able to express their views freely and are expected to *listen* openly to the views of others. (This is slightly prescriptive for our present purposes, since as we note below there may be other purposes behind dialogue.) A dialogue in which there is genuine freedom to express points of view without fear or intimidation *and* there is genuine willingness to listen and on this basis to come to agreed decisions is already highly 'ethical' in terms of the norms internal to its operation (though most actual dialogues fall short of this ideal to some degree).

It will be argued that creating situations in which dialogues of this kind actually occur when they need to occur, i.e. when the vital interests of parties are affected by the policies of others, will contribute to the empowerment of marginalized peoples. We put it like this because very often when decision are taken by actors which have negative consequences for others like the marginalized poor, either no communication takes place – it just happens through passive marginalization – or communication takes place in other forms such as coercive labour negotiations – so we have forms of active intentional marginalization. Oppression does not generally occur without communication (agreements based on unequal power etc.)

One of the key questions is over how to get the powerful to accept situations as ones in which dialogue will take place, i.e. they are prepared to sit down round the table and talk with those whom they affect in the manner of dialogue, rather that other manners of discourse or no discourse at all. This may or may not require dialogue at other levels as well, i.e. dialogue about the need for dialogue as a standard development tool. But here we would note a point which we return to later, that in the last analysis we may need to appeal to first order ethical arguments in favour of dialogue at whatever level, where these arguments are themselves not the product of prior dialogue.

Ethical dialogue in particular may be defined here as dialogue which is in content *explicitly ethical.* (It is quite apparent, as a quick review of entries found on the topic of the web will reveal, that there really is no standard definition of this idea. We necessarily need to be somewhat prescriptive.) At least three kinds of ethical dialogue will be identified:

(i) explicit normative discourse about particular policy–decisions and dilemmas;

(ii) explicit normative discourse aimed at decisions on general goals and objectives;

(iii) explicit ethical dialogue about the general ethical principles to be accepted – such as the dialogue that informs the formation of a set of global ethics principles as in the *Earth Charter* (2000).

The importance of all three levels is significant in two ways. First, there is a two-way mutual reinforcement between the different levels. Dialogue at the grass roots level will inform higher level dialogue but at the same time the higher level dialogue – and its results – will inform the moral framework assumed in grass-roots dialogue. (e.g. a powerful logging company is not likely to listen to forest dwellers' perceptions unless at some stage its representatives have come, through other kinds of dialogue at other levels, to accept a certain *kind* of ethic that says (a) all people are equally valuable and it is important to allow people to achieve their 'good'; and (b) the 'voices' of a people are an accurate indication of that people's 'good', etc.).

Two things are implicit in the above setting out of key ideas which now need to be made explicit as interpretations of the remit of this project report.

(a) Ethical dialogue is important because its adoption will in fact increase the possibility that the voices and perspectives of the marginalized will be better heard;

(b) but since we need ethical dialogue at all levels, it is not merely the voices of marginalized people that will *directly* improve their lot. It is also the voices of those who take up their cause – whether it is NGOs, INGOs, sympathetic academics (like the present writer), committed global citizens of various kinds, sometimes people within government departments or companies who are allies from with the organisations that are generally part of the problem.

Another way of putting this is to say that the 'voices' of the marginalized may well be expressed not merely through the marginalized themselves but by others who care about their well-being. So the idea of the voice of the marginalized *using* ethical dialogue is interpreted broadly to include what others may do on their behalf. Our reason for this extension is that without it the role of ethical dialogue in helping the marginalized is hamstrung, or rather weakened by having one arm tied behind one's back. It is inevitable that we discuss this when we look at the wider picture, since the ethical dialogue at national and international levels is likely to involve many agents of change, not just the few of the marginalized who might have the confidence, articulateness and indeed opportunity to act at these levels.

Thus two assumptions are made here which some may regard as controversial: (a) Minimally, it is possible for 'outsiders' to represent effectively the interests and more particularly the perspectives of others like the marginalized poor. Though there are dangers of course of cultural imperialism when someone from one part of the world with one set of experiences attempts to represent the interests of others, these dangers can be overcome, given a serious intent to engage in sympathetic identification etc. (b) More strongly, without the active co-operation of those who can support the cause of the marginalized, the fate of the marginalized will remain just that.

There are really two points here: first, if ethical dialogue is to occur at the international level, it will involve many actors from many different backgrounds. As an illustration, the *Earth Charter* emerged from a process of dialogue with many people throughout the world, but at the same time the four key players who actually put it all together were all highly educated, highly motivated individuals, two from the USA, one from Australia and one from Costa Rica. We doubt if the *Earth Charter* could have come into existence without the vital role of some such actors who are themselves not marginalized!

Second, apart from ethical dialogue, it will be the actions and attitudes of many people all over the world – ordinary committed 'global' citizens interested in supporting charities, engaging in ethical consuming, pressurising their governments for better trade policies etc. etc. as well as dedicate experts – which will make the difference (see e.g. Dower 2003). As will be explained later, unless the ethical framework of international relations and the free market global ethic is challenged and changed, major impediments to the marginalized poor will continue to operate. Our point is simple: the position of the marginalized will not significantly change without *their* empowerment and this will occur through ethical dialogue, but at the same time it will not change without the cooperation of many others throughout the world who through ethical dialogue and in many other ways support their cause.

3. Further thoughts on dialogue/ethical dialogue

Dialogue is a form of communication which can be distinguished from other forms of communication in terms of its goals and its methods:

(a) Goals:

> To come to some agreed answer to a question which the participants are interested in:

> (a) the truth/what to believe

> (b) practical decision: what to do, what policy to pursue, what norms to agree on

This already involved a rather specialised conception. The goal of many dialogues is to advance *toward* decisions without necessarily getting to that point. In business communities there is some acceptance of stakeholder dialogue, but this may be no more than companies setting up systems (e.g. questionnaires, Internet forums etc.), which allow stakeholders to express their views, which will then lead the company, hopefully, if it takes the purpose of dialogue as hearing and accommodating stakeholder points of view, later to reach their *own* improved decisions about policy (see e.g. Unerman & Bennett 2004).

(b) Method:

(i) Ground-rules

- All parties are free to express their views without intimidation

- All parties are willing to listen to other parties

- Discussion of these views occurs based on the offering of rational arguments or being guided by reason (where the weight of reason is not related to the economic or other bargaining power of the person or party who offers the reason)

- The intention of all parties is reach a consensus decision which reflects the interests of the various parties.

There are two ways in which trying to reach a decision which reflects the interests of all parties involved may be understood. Both are in contrast with seeing the dialogue process as one in which one's own or one's party's interests are best advanced without regard to the interests of others except insofar as they have to be taken into account if one is get what one wants. (To enter dialogue with that intention would be to subvert the purpose of dialogue – of course this often happens and we have the 'form' of dialogue without the 'substance').

One appropriate way is to see the dialogue process as one in which each party advances their interests but is prepared to see those interests checked, modified or re-expressed in the light of what emerges as others' interests so that the outcome is fair, just, or for the overall good (of the group, society as a whole or even 'the world' if that is the remit of the discussion). The other way is to think of the dialogue as one in which from the beginning each party is *seeking* the outcome which is just, fair or for the overall good. The difference is between seeing the normative factors as *constraints* on the legitimate pursuit of interests or as a *goal* of the dialogue.

In practice these approaches become fused, and certainly if the overall intention is an outcome genuinely acceptable to all, this mixture of motivations may not matter. In practice, there may advantages in recognising both strands. Certainly in terms of the process of dialogue it may well be appropriate that the dialogue starts with each party presenting their 'case' in terms of their interests but proceeds later to each party trying to find and making proposals for what is overall just/fair to all parties or what is for the overall good of all affected. In any case the transition from a concern for one's interests to concern for the 'public good' is not in itself a transition from conflict to harmony, since many disputes are also about conflicting values and norms anyway. Although we have spoken of what is fair/just or for the overall good, these phrases cover (or conceal) a variety of interpretations of just what these amount to.

These tensions can be illustrated if we consider the role of voting. Although voting could take place and in many real situations actually has to take place because of the need for urgent decisions, on the whole voting fails to achieve an outcome which really does properly express the interests of all. Although voting could (as Rousseau imagined on the idea of the general will: Rousseau 1762) be done on the basis that each party votes for what it thinks is for the overall good of all, in practice, voting tends to express what each party thinks is the best outcome *for that party*. Whether voting does this with voters having heard all the considerations of others and taking them properly into account or simply voting selfishly, the avoidance of voting in dialogic decisions-making is based on the premise that it is more likely that consensus-based decisions will lead to parties wanting outcomes which are at least constrained by normative considerations of fairness/public good, if not actually wanting such normative outcomes in themselves.

This dialogic decision-making process is contrasted to a monologic process in which one thinker (or party) attempts to make a decision on what it is that he thinks, thinking on his own, is in everyone's interests. The dialogic process enables every party to have their voice properly heard (rather like Habermas' ideal speech community: see Unerman & Bennett 2004).

The assumption is made that the use of this process by the marginalized (or their representatives) will result in decisions which properly reflect the interests of the marginalized, i.e. favour the marginalized as compared with the situation ante or the general status quo now.

(ii) Practical arrangements

There are also questions about the different techniques of dialogue and questions about the approach to ethics and the method of tackling ethical issues. We have in mind various things here:

- Practical questions about procedure such as: who talks when; silence between speakers; Chatham House rules (in some contexts); seating arrangements; different ways and formats to be used e.g. case studies; the timing of the dialogue and its stages. The latter includes the importance of allowing sufficient time for parties (especially the inexperienced marginalized) to prepare their positions before the

dialogue starts and to develop their positions in the course of dialogue (which implies that it take part in stages with intervals) (cf. the stages noted in the manual by Avante Consulta 2004).

- The presence of third parties: it is important that in dialogues (or indeed any negotiations whether they are dialogic in form or not), wherever possible, there are parties present other than the main groups such as employers and employees: these might be neutral observers, or parties with some interest in what is going on (such as a green pension investment manager), or indeed 'allies' of the marginalized such as NGOs. The point is that with the presence of others, the position of the marginalized is more likely to be heard and acted on by the powerful. The complaints of a community are more likely to be heard and addressed. This is partly because the sheer presence of others may embarrass companies into doing the 'decent' thing, but often it will be that those others involved being sympathetic to the position of the marginalized may add to their case, by their presence if not by their active participation.

- Styles of ethical dialogue to do with e.g. the universalising question 'what if you were in my position?' or 'what if everyone were to do this?'; recognising the distinction between operating principles and more fundamental principles; what are matters of decision and what matters of discernment; etc.

- More generally the approach to ethics itself adopted by the poor/marginalised and their supporters: here we refer to the key questions about whether relativist ethics is appropriate or whether some kind of global ethics is needed – but it makes a great difference what global ethic.

Part of what we are saying here is that it simply isn't sufficient that the leaders of the poor/marginalised and their supporters go into dialogue with their target groups, just put candidly their ethical perspective and this will be sufficient for the truth to win out, even if their perspective is the truth of the matter. A way of understanding one's perspective and a certain sophistication and skill in handling a presentation is going to be important as well.

4. Why will dialogue and ethical dialogue help the marginalized?

The thesis is that the method of dialogue properly conducted will produce results favourable to the poor/marginalised (and in the case of ethical dialogue in the strong sense, *explicit* discussion of ethical principles will lead to formulations of ethical ideas which if expressed will lead to better results for the poor/marginalised).

At a most basic level an explanation may be something like this: in a context in which each party is able to voice its perspective and there is an expectation that some kind of agreement is to be achieved, then whatever the motives of the parties (especially the powerful) – such as using the dialogue process as a screen for promoting interests or not wanting to be embarrassed by not showing some public concern of the marginalized – the use of this method will have better results than its absence.

However if we probe a little and try and find a more normatively satisfying answer, the question 'why should this be so?' is a genuinely unsettling one. After all a genuinely open dialogue does not have a predetermined outcome. Only a pseudo-dialogue (like top-down participation) has a predetermined outcome and this is where powerful participants can control the outcome in their favour. Even if one thinks that dialogue does lead to outcomes favourable to the poor, this can only be a probability judgement, given that all actual dialogues, however fairly and independently conducted, will never equal an ideal dialogue

done under ideal conditions. But why do dialogues have this likely outcome? Unless they do, the advocacy of dialogue as a method of improving the position of the poor/marginalised is undermined.

There are several reasons for this. First, if the 'target' group, i.e. the group whose policies are either harming or not helping the marginalized, is brought to listen carefully to the situation and perspective of the poor/marginalised, then by a process of sensitive identification, there should be more willingness to adjust their position so as to favour the poor or at least not to impede the poor. This is a psychological theses about 'encountering the other' properly and its effects. Second, the process of hearing the ethical arguments, the rights claims and so on, will lead to an acceptance in some form of the rightness of policies that favour or at least do not impede the poor.

The second thesis about the efficacy of ethical thought depends on one or other of two claims about what is going on in dialogue. The first is about the objective rightness/reasonableness of the ethical perspective of the poor which the other party under the favourable dialogic conditions will come to accept. This of course depends on claiming that there is an objectively right or reasonable position in ethics and this method is likely to persuade people who have not seen this to come to see this. The engagement in rational thought under the conditions of a dialogic sharing of reasons by all parties concerned is most likely to generate the right ethical conclusions. The giving and receiving of reasons in a dialogic setting is a kind of liberation from prejudice and from failures or inadequacies in ethical ideas.

There is however another way one could support the claim that the dialogic method would favour results helpful to the poor/marginalised. This is to say that although there is no reasonable or right moral position (because some form of relativism or subjectivism is accepted in ethics), it is just as a matter of fact the case that dialogue (as opposed to other methods of communication and agreement) leads to favouring the ethical positions that support the poor/marginalised. Put crudely: a voice that has been listened to is more likely to make a difference than if it had not be allowed to be heard (because no dialogue takes place).

Thus a more complex normative account can be given (which also explains on the assumption that the parties take seriously the intention of the dialogic method) and is like this: (a) all parties' interests count equally; (b) what each party or their representatives voice as their interests is likely to reflect what their interests actually are; (c) the free exchange of reasons will favour the marginalized because their voices are heard and thus the decision will properly reflect their interests (which are systematically not properly reflected as at present).

Actually there are two strands to this, the Socratic strand and the egalitarian strand:

The Socratic strand (evidenced by the Socratic dialogues of Plato in which the parties to the discussion were anything but equal) emphasises that though all participants are open to the influence of reason/argument, some are better able to articulate and present reasoned arguments: such superiority in reasoning is not an unfair expression of power or control by the articulate over the others but an aid to all getting closer to what it is reasonable to agree; what is ethically reasonable favours the marginalized (because of the proper grasp of such ethical principles as that all people are equal, justice requires recognition of rights, etc.); so the dialogic process will favour the marginalized.

The egalitarian strand emphasises the idea that in a dialogue all voices and perspectives are equally valid (i.e. not egalitarianism of social opportunity but egalitarianism of dialogic standing); this coupled with the premise that the dialogic procedure allows all voices to be properly heard leads to resultant decisions which favour the marginalized.

There are tensions between these two models – objectivist and subjectivist – of how dialogue is effective and of the two normative underpinnings – the Socratic and the egalitarian – which theorising its value (note the two pairs need not be aligned[3]), but in practice all the elements mingle together to provide the right effect.

5. Why will *ethical* dialogue also help?

Ethical dialogue (over particular decisions and over policies) simply emphasises the explicit importance of ethical discussion as part of the dialogic process. It helps because the exposure of ethics will unmask hidden value assumptions and/or vested interests.

Furthermore ethical discussion brings out certain formal features of ethical reasoning. For instance:

- The principle of universalisability: so act that what you propose to do can be willed to be done by everyone (an expression of Kant's categorical imperative; see Kant 1785; cf. Hare 1963)

- The golden rule (reflecting the above principle of universalisability, but found in all the major religions): do unto other what you would have done to you. (cf. the question: 'how would you like it if this was done to you?')

- The idea of reciprocity: one party doing something in return for another party's doing something etc.

- The idea that ethics is about 'equal consideration of interests' (Singer 1979) (or accepting the principle that' everyone is to count for one and no one more than one': Bentham quoted in Mill 1861)

- Respect for persons: treat other people in such a way that you accept that they have legitimate ends to pursue (and do not merely treat them as means to your own ends) (another expression of Kant's categorical imperative)

When we turn to higher level ethical dialogue about moral norms and principles themselves, we can see how these inform the ethical data for lower level ethical dialogue.

If someone favours the Socratic model of how dialogue is effective, the point would be that the higher-order process of dialogue is designed to *discern*, according to reason (used dialogically and thus exposed to constructive criticism along the way), what the reasonable ethical norms are (including the moral basis of dialogue itself) and knowledge of these will make lower level dialogues more effective. If someone favours the egalitarian model, the acceptance of the dialogic norms (including the egalitarian model) would be something which has emerged from higher level dialogue. But this higher level dialogue would also be the generator of the relevant 'global ethics' norms which inform ethical decision-making.

Whilst we favour the former way of thinking of the value of dialogue (partly because it seems that not all norms can come out of dialogue since dialogue itself presupposes some norms), the important point is that on either account (Socratic or egalitarian), the dialogic method, including that of explicit ethical discourse at various levels, contributes to decisions and policies which give proper weight to the marginalized and thus potentially favour them in the world as we have it.

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[3]   Although the Socratic approach is very likely to be aligned with the objectivist approach to value, there is no presumption that the egalitarian approach will be subjectivist.

In regard to the importance of global values, we can take for instance the *Earth Charter*, which we will argue is an appropriate global ethic, both because it is the product of dialogue and wide consultation itself and because it has validity anyway as a reasonable basis for a global ethic acceptable to all. Assuming for now the reasonableness of that position (discussed in section 11), we can formulate a series of leading questions. These questions unlike the more formal questions we indicated above, are questions about the substance of ethics. They might act as a checklist of questions that should be asked in respect to the issue being discussed:

- Does the policy being considered show adequate respect for nature? If not could some other way be found that satisfies human needs and aspirations but is more respectful of nature?

- Does the policy meet the requirements of social justice in regard to meeting the needs of all affected, especially those who are marginalized?

- Does the policy respect the fundamental human rights of all affected?[4]

- Does the policy show a commitment to democratic values both in terms of the processes giving rise to it (i.e. the dialogic process itself) and in terms of its implementations strengthening rather than weakening democratic participation later?

- Does the policy demonstrate a commitment to peace and non-violence as the standard values to inform subsequent implementations of the policy proposed?

- Is the policy fully sensitive to the diverse cultural values of the participants involved?

These questions are based on what we see as the main ethical principles of the *Earth Charter*. But the *Earth Charter* contains many more detailed sub-principles and insofar as these principles come to be widely accepted, they can form the basis of further questions which could form a relevant checklist. (Of course the checklist of ethical questions should be tailored to suit the types of dialogic situation involved.)

6. Interim summary

Dialogue then can be seen as a two-way or multi-way method of communication in which (i) each party to the discussion is able freely without intimidation to express their opinions; (ii) each party is willing to listen carefully and openly to other points of view; (iii) the discussion of points of disagreement is done in the spirit of constructive criticism; (iv) there is a serious intention in all parties to reach an agreement which takes into account the various perspectives (in trying to reach consensus, taking a vote or some other method).

Dialogue so characterised is already ethical or normative in the following two senses: (a) implicitly there are values internal to the process so described about the values of listening openly, constructively criticizing, reaching decisions fairly; (b) explicitly, the differences of opinion are nearly always in part and often to a significant degree ethical or normative, and the attempt to reach decisions is an attempt to reach a consensus on some policy decision which reflects agreement on ethical values or priorities or at least a working compromise

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[4]   There are various views of course why we should accept human rights, but it can be argued that human rights are in part the product of international negotiation and consensus building.

between different ethical principles and priorities (which is normative in the sense of there being agreement that in the circumstances such and such ought to be done).

A dialogue may be seen as ethical in a third stronger sense in that part of its content is the *explicit* discussion of ethical values, norms or principles themselves, with a view to reaching agreement not so much on particular policies to be pursued but rather certain set of values and norms which then form the basis for future policy decisions and other practical outcomes.

So far so good. The dialogical method may help the case for the poor/marginalised, but we have not gone far enough if we overlook the fact that there are all sorts of ways in which dialogue can take place which have to do with skills of dialogue and issues of technique.

7. Dialogue at the global level

Ethical dialogue at the international/global level is important because if we are to develop or create a global ethic as an agreed set of ethical norms which can form the basis of dialogue at other levels, then such a global ethic has to be one that is in principle acceptable to all people from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Whilst we might have a conception of a dialogue involving everyone on the planet[5], we know that that is impossible. What is possible is actual consultation including representative people from a wide variety of backgrounds.

Such a process of consultation (which was exhibited by the consultation process leading to the *Earth Charter*) is of course unlikely to adopt ethical norms and even less justification of them (religious, metaphysical, or tied to particular cultural traditions) which are based on the *specific* worldviews of different groups, and makes no sense to people who do not share these backgrounds. So what is likely to come out of it are principles, values (re the 'good') and norms (re the 'right') which are at least in principle accessible to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. This does not mean that all people will in fact accept these norms (such a global ethic as set of values *actually accepted* by all is a chimera), but what emerges from such a consultation process is something that it is reasonable for anyone to accept, given reasonable understanding of the nature and purpose of ethics and of our global condition and predicament. One of the things we hope to show is that the dialogue process will favour the emergence of a global ethic rather than the opposite, namely the acceptance of a relativism vis a vis moral values which denies any universal values and norms (see e.g. Kim 1999). But we have to be clear that the debate about whether universalism or relativism is more reasonable is indeed one of the things that global discussion has to be about – we say discussion rather than dialogue here because in a sense if real dialogue is possible then at least the values internal to dialogue discussed earlier have to be accepted as universal standards of some kind (so relativism is at least wrong here).

On the other hand, it must be recognised that dialogue about global norms only occurs precisely because the participants in it come with ethical ideas which have already been partly formed prior to the dialogue, and will indeed continue to hold the norms they hold, perhaps in modified form (even if those norms are partly exhibited in the global ethic based on global dialogue) for reasons independent of the dialogue – namely the more complex worldview (theology, philosophy) which any genuine thinker is bound to have and in terms of which he or she endorses the product of dialogue (if they do) (see e.g. Dower 1998: ch. 6). We say this to stress the point that dialogical reason can only take place alongside monological reasoning – the reasoning that any individual does on his own in the proverbial armchair (not

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[5]   This would be a bit like a global 'original position' which Beitz adapts (Beitz 1979 part 3) from Rawls' famous conception of the conditions under which principles of social justice would be chosen (behind a veil of ignorance where no one would know about their wealth, intelligence, social position, conception of the good and so on: Rawls 1971) or as an application at a global level of Habermas' idea of an ideal speech community.

intellectually on his own in isolation of course because all thinking is in response the wider range of inputs from earlier conversations, books, the media etc.). Indeed our writing in this report is in this sense monological, even though it about the idea of dialogue and supports what we claim is, or would be, the product of appropriate dialogic processes. Our discussion of the appropriate global ethic for helping the marginalized is developed later on in the report.

8. The issue of levels

Dialogue can be important at various levels as well:

The complexity of levels is emphasised if we recognise a whole range of 'advocates' of the marginalized:

- Poor people themselves acting as agents of change, not perceived as passive recipients of change

- Their supporters (outsiders): aid agencies, NGOs etc. (including enlightened individuals working within organisations like government departments or business companies which may in general be regard as part of the 'target' to be converted into accepting policies more favourable to the marginalized)

- Cooperation/solidarity between different groups of poor people (what Scholte calls 'particularist solidarities' such as networks of indigenous people across the world: Scholte 2000)

Ethical dialogue can occur at many levels and in many formations:

(a) Within poor/marginalised groups e.g. how to respond to perceived threats to their livelihood – mainly concerned with policies and strategies, but to some extent concerned with articulating the right values to present to others.

(b) Between poor/marginalised groups in different places (see above re solidarity), seeking the extent of common strategies and common values, thus gaining confidence through (internally) a sense of solidarity and (externally) strength in greater numbers.

(c) Between poor/marginalised groups and their supporters (NGOs, IIED etc.) – again this will be mainly concerned with developing effective strategies and also articulating more carefully the ethical positions which may be voiced in later meetings with the 'target' groups.

(d) Between their supporters (e.g. cooperation between NGOs). There are actually a lot of issues here to do with the policies and ethical approaches taken by NGOs themselves in support of the marginalized which can usefully be resolved by multilateral dialogue between them. This has partly to do with the different ethical terminologies that may be used, partly to do with disagreement about appropriate forms of aid for the marginalized, and partly to do with recognising the importance of fully recognising the 'voices' of the marginalized whom they are trying to help (since a failure to hear what the marginalized are saying is often a fault of NGOs as well as with government aid programmes, even though amongst NGOs it is at least a worry they usually have themselves about this failure to hear these voices adequately.)

(e) Between poor/marginalised groups (with or without their supporters and in concert or separately) and the other groups/actors whose policies need changing (the target groups). Here we have the heart of the dialogue process insofar as it is the expectation that, if representatives of companies and governments accept the need for dialogue and take it seriously in negotiating policies that affect the marginalized, then real changes are possible.

(f) Between the supporters (with or without representatives of marginalized groups) and the representatives of governments, e.g. in background discussions when international agreements are made. Here we are referring to the development of international laws and regulations that determine how development occurs through international trade and investment etc. It is clear that the kinds of negotiations which occur in the formal debates that lead to such decisions do not generally approximate to the form of ethical dialogue (though if the norms and values that inform those debates are of the suitable 'global ethics' kind (see later for detail), then the decisions are more likely to be *like* what ethical dialogue would support). However much of the *background* discussion at such international meetings involves NGOs talking with government representatives (such as happens in off-the-record meetings with diplomats at Quaker House in Geneva) can suitably take dialogue form.

(g) Between individuals from many backgrounds and representatives from many different sectors (marginalized groups themselves, NGOs, governments, businesses), in such higher-level gatherings where the idea is to try and develop common norms (e.g. a global ethic such as the Earth Charter).

It will be apparent from the list of levels and types of dialogue situation, that the purposes of ethical dialogue are varied.

In some cases, as with dialogue within a marginalized group or between different marginalized groups or between marginalized groups and their supporters, the main function of ethical dialogue is to strengthen and clarify the appropriate lines of thought. The procedural principles underlying dialogue are actually as important to these discussions as they are to discussions with those whose polices need changing. Even if people have the same agenda – strengthening the position of marginalized – there may be many different ways of articulating this and the need for listening is important!

In other cases – perhaps the central cases – the purpose of the dialogue (as proposed by those who want it) is to get priorities changed and thus persuade those with power to agree to such changes (and this might apply to a local decision about logging, as well as to regional or national decision about development polices, and to the creation of new international law).

And third, there is the pursuit of dialogue as exhibited under (g) to try and get groups of people from different backgrounds to agree of shared norms and values. Such dialogue is generally an ongoing exercise, and in any case agreed norms evolve over time. These norms and values are agreed without any immediate purpose of applying them to policy decisions, but of course the point of such norms is that if they are accepted (or are accepted more widely or by those who have some power) then subsequent decisions (whether or not these have been mediated by the dialogue process) may be 'better' in terms of being fair to all affected and thus favouring (under normal conditions) the marginalized. Such dialogic exercises can happen on a global scale like the Earth Charter process or the co-operation between the world's religions (leading to the Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago in 1993 producing the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic*: Küng & Kuschel 1993), but of course can go on at many levels and in many formats (government consultations, the use by companies of questionnaires or email facilities or Internet forums).

There are three further issues here that need to be discussed, two related to issues of representation:

(a) The representation of poor people by poor people: clearly in any context in which dialogue and negotiation take place, some people play a leading role. Even with dialogue between poor people themselves, there is the question of how far the articulate can represent the inarticulate

(the literate the non-literate, etc.). There is an issue then of the breadth and character of consultation etc. This also relates to the process issue below.

(b) The representation of poor people's interests by organisations which are outsiders: again how far can outsiders properly understand the needs of poor/marginalised people? Can there be a failure of perception? A failure of will (because of the inevitability of other agendas)?

There are always dangers involved in representation, but one is either an optimist about the *possibility* of objectivity i.e. about the possibility that one thinker can genuinely understand and desire the good of another, even if that good is rather different, or one is not. In this Report the optimistic assumption is made.

(c) Solidarity between different poor/marginalised groups. There are evident advantages in collaboration between different groups because of the sense of empowerment from acting together, shared knowledge etc. The extent however of the common perspectives on appropriate development for the groups is an issue.

If one emphasizes that the problem for poor/marginalised groups is that the dominant development paradigms are not sensitive to local variation of culture and environment *and that these local conditions vary considerably*, then the sharing what's appropriate at local development is limited because of that variation.

If one emphasizes the point that the problems of the poor/marginalised are due to the neglect of their development needs because of the indifference or active marginalization by other agents (richer people in localities, big businesses), then the common problems facing the poor are indeed common. Identifying these commonalities and speaking with one or at least a collective voice are themselves empowering both internally and vis a vis their impact on others.

Both emphases are important, but the potential tension between the two is reduced if we recognise that even to the extent that solutions to development problems may vary from place to place, there will be common themes to local struggles, such as the protection of 'indigenous knowledge' and the recognition of what is common in the diverse strategies helps them rationalize and legitimate these perspectives to wider audiences or what we are calling the 'target groups'. (This relates to the pitfalls of relativism discussed below which of course show what too much emphasis on the uniqueness of each development situation can lead to.)

9. Some comments on practical processes

In the light of the above analysis we are now in a position to look at a few more specific question about dialogue:

(a) What opportunities are there to use ethical dialogue to shape development agendas and overcome marginalization within them?

Basically the opportunity to use ethical dialogue exists precisely where the key actors are ready to accept the method as a way of determining polices. In the case of companies, there is now a great interest in corporate social responsibility and in the idea of stakeholders. Whatever their motives, companies are often now concerned to show themselves to be ethically responsible in regard to things like labour practices and environmental impacts. Their understanding of what ethics involves may not be very sophisticated (or earnest) but IF there is an *expressed* willingness to act in an ethically responsible way, then the possibility of introducing ethical dialogue is strong as a method of getting that ethical responsibility properly discharged. The point is that if it is accepted that ethical responsibility is about taking seriously the interests of those whom one affects by ones action or policies, and if

dialogue can be shown to be an effective way of bringing out just what those interests are, then the case for using dialogue is made.

Likewise with governments and their departments and agencies. Although as we indicate later much in international relations is still dominated by unhelpful assumptions about the legitimacy of pursuing unrestrained national self-interest, it is also the case that the relevance of ethics generally and the acceptance of a cosmopolitan ethical perspective in particular are often accepted and indeed proclaimed. On this basis then, the case for a cosmopolitan ethic which takes seriously the interests of the marginalized is made, and again the argument can be introduced that ethical dialogue is an effective way of getting this clear and persuasively presented.

Less dramatically the opportunity to use dialogue is in a sense present whenever an agent is aware of it as a method of discussion, believes in it and is in position to take part in policy-making. Thus if as we have suggested NGOs can act on behalf of the marginalised, then they will have frequent opportunity to introduce the approach, even though the way this is done may be indirect and partial. If other parties are not ready to use it, its approach can still be used in discussions insofar as those who do favour it can use some of its techniques and values effectively. One does not have to be in a full or official dialogue situation to be able to make points like 'it's important that we hear the voice of the poor since how they see the situation is important for determining what their interests are – and we are surely interested in what meets their interests, aren't we?', or to take the line 'this is all very well, but if you to put yourself in their shoes, would you be entirely happy about the results of your proposed policies?', i.e. elements of dialogue can be used and encouraged without the process officially being called dialogue.

It should be noted that opportunities for dialogue can come in two forms: opportunities can be *taken* or they can be *made*. In fact there are three kinds of situation in which dialogue can take place – first circumstances in which the marginalized do not choose to engage in dialogue at all because they are forced to enter into dialogue/negotiation and in such circumstances the important point is that that they are prepared for such circumstances in having the skills and support to hand. Here it is not an opportunity (since having an opportunity implies one is free not to use it). But in many circumstances they may find 'windows of opportunity' in which they can respond to invitations to participate e.g. in stakeholder consultations, or to propose to a company that a dialogue might be useful because they perceive that the company is receptive to the idea. On the other hand, there could be circumstances in which pressure could be put on a company to enter into dialogue. This pressure might come from mass actions, demonstration or by mobilising the support of NGOs and other agents in government, the business world or banks, so that companies feel the need to 'talk' which they might not have felt beforehand. Here then the opportunity is *created* by active initiatives, though it should be noted that the pressure here which creates the opportunity is anything but the power of 'reason' which is meant to be internal to the dialogic process itself. This is not criticise it but it is to recognise that there are variety of means available to advancing the interests of the marginalized, and not all of them are premised on the same ethical norms as dialogue itself.

(b) Stages in the dialogic process

Ethical dialogue can occur in many contexts and at many levels, but it is worth noting that in the central case of policies being made by companies that directly affect the well-being of the marginalized, there are many stages in the dialogic process. What we mean by this is that not only is dialogue important in the formation of the policy in the first place, but it is also important as an ongoing process whereby the implementation of the policy is monitored. Thus from time to time there can be meetings or consultations to see how the policy is being perceived by the stakeholders. Likewise if the implementation of a policy (such as a specific project) has come to an end, then there can be a review process in which further dialogue can

occur and a fair assessment of it can be made – not of course now to make a difference to what happened (though there might be claims or compensation if something did not go right), but to provide markers or ethical benchmarks for future projects. On the other hand, ethical dialogue may not actually have played a crucial role in the *formation* of a policy, but comes in as a monitoring process. Companies interested in corporate social responsibility often now set up consultation mechanisms through which the stakeholders can express their comments – often of course critical because the policies are not (completely) satisfactory (see Unerman & Bennett 2004).

If we look at the international level, there is clearly an important role for ethical dialogue not just in contributing to the formation of international policies and laws, but in the ongoing monitoring of what happens in the world – whether it be government or business companies pursuing the wrong policies (either through selfishness or through misguided priorities). This dialogue can occur through what interested organisations initiate, but can equally be an expression of the cumulative effect of many individuals acting in 'global civil society'. But it needs to be stressed that dialogue itself is only one of many types of mechanism which at this level contribute toward creating the right global ethics framework. Ethical critique of policies, as well as the kind of exposure of malpractice (that something like Human Rights Watch can do) are also important. Of course these ethical critiques come from an ethical point of view which has been developed in each thinker in a variety of ways. But as we have indicated earlier insofar as a global ethics perspective can be seen and presented (to those who are the object of the ethical critique) as being backed by the fact that it is widely shared (and supported by dialogic processes), then arguably it is likely to have more impact than if it is just something which emanates from an individual thinker (whose ethical position can be dismissed – even if illegitimately, if it is thought through – as 'just his point of view'). So in the background the emergence of dialogue about global ethics is important. (Further reflection on these issues is to be found in Appendix 1)

10. The involvement of ordinary individuals

One of themes of this report has been that the marginalized will not be empowered unless a number of different things happen – at one end their voices are heard in local negotiations because the powerful are willing to listen, and at the other end the whole international ethical climate as reflected in international policies, international laws and foreign policies of particular countries is one that supports this empowerment of the poor. The latter will not happen unless there is a sea change in the way people generally think in those parts of the world which via their governments or their business companies have control of how things go in the world. Thus it comes down to developing a moral culture which has the right orientation to the world in being 'globally oriented' (Parehk 2002) and have the right 'global ethics' values. What in short is need is the development of a global citizenship perspective, one according to which there are universal values (all human beings matter equally) and there are global i.e. trans-national responsibilities. It is precisely the development of this cosmopolitan approach that provides the key to the transformation of policies of governments and business companies (see e.g. Nussbaum 1996; Dower 2003). This might be partly because members of governments and companies might themselves actually come to accept the global ethics perspective (and *want* to see this implemented in their policies). But it is partly and mainly because individuals *as citizens* can, through voting, pressure groups etc., influence their government into pursuing more cosmopolitan policies (vis a vis aid and trade) and also setting up regulatory frameworks which constraint what companies may do, and because individuals *as economic actors* (consumers, investors etc.) can by their choices send signals to companies as to what economic policies they want the companies to pursue – thus we have the fair trade and ethical investment movements in many countries. Of course at the moment this makes little difference because relatively few people put pressure on governments and companies in these ways. But if rather more did so, then things would change and change to the benefit of the marginalized.

The reasons why any individual comes to accept a global ethic perspective are various – general influence in the parental, schooling and cultural background, their own reading and reflection, as well as various kinds of discussions with others about these issues and values. Relatively little of such discussion would actually take the form of ethical dialogue as defined earlier – self-conscious dialogue according to clearly defined procedures about the ethical values – but nevertheless they constitute in a broader sense 'dialogue' qua discussions/communications about the ethical issues. What perhaps is important here is that those who already take a global ethics point of view and have a concern to create a world in which the marginalized are empowered see it as important for them to influence others into accepting the same perspective. This might be done in various ways – joining NGOs, campaigning, 'speaking truth to power', writing (as the present writer is doing!) – but arguably amongst the things that are important are the engagement of others in discussion and conversations about these global issues. These discussions do not have to conform to the formal model of an ethical dialogue (as defined earlier), though from their point of view this ideal of ethical dialogue (listening to other voices, being guided by reason etc.) should be operative anyway as far as possible.

Furthermore, it is important that such global citizens in endeavouring to persuade others of the same global point of view, recognise that this ethic even if not based for them on there being a consensus is nevertheless made more appealing to others (at least many others) if one can point to the fact that such an ethic is becoming widely accepted and that it is emerging because of dialogic processes. This is important because one has to avoid the imputation that one's ethic is being 'imposed' on others as a form of western cultural imperialism, or is inappropriate because after all ethical relativism is right.

The motives for relativism are understandable and it is part of what a global ethics advocate needs to be fully aware of so that replies are available. One of the major sources of the appeal of relativism is that the dominant ethics paradigms presented as 'global ethics' seem somehow unsatisfactory and certainly not helpful to adequately responding to the needs of the marginalized. So we need now turn to the defence of an appropriate global ethic.

11. Global ethics

(a) The relevance of global ethics

Our first task is to show briefly what is wrong with some current dominant paradigms of ethics. Our thesis is that many of the problems of marginalization are due to the operation of these forms of justification for current practices that have the effect of marginalization. Note that here we are engaging philosophically in a typically monological analysis (though indirectly greatly influenced by numerous discussions/dialogue with many over the years – it does not come out a vacuum). However, it seems evident that this kind of position should emerge from a higher level ethical dialogue and we give some illustration of this with the example of the *Earth Charter* later on.

We can concede that many of the problems of the poor arise out of others (individuals, companies or countries) simply acting out of self-interest and greed in deliberately ignoring or undermining the position of the poor/marginalised (because they are weak/vulnerable) in ways which are accepted even by them as wrong. Dialogue and certain techniques of ethical negotiation can check this tendency (by embarrassment, exposure etc.), as we note elsewhere. However, a significant part of the claim of this report is that the *content* of an ethic is important too. Identifying which are the right elements of an ethic can help make the case effective for the poor/marginalised.

(b) The four dominant paradigms

I discuss this under four general headings: utilitarianism, libertarianism; westphalian internationalism and instrumental anthropocentrism

Utilitarianism: utilitarianism has been an immensely influential normative theory about the basis of ethics. In its classical formulation it was called the Greatest Happiness Principe according to which we ought to promote the best balance of good over bad in all our actions, rules, policies etc. Good was understood as pleasure and bad as pain/suffering (the classical text for this was Mill 1861). Later Utilitarians preferred to talk of the good in terms of interests or preferences (e.g. Smart in Smart & Williams 1973), and in public policy terms the idea led to 'cost benefit' analysis where the cost and benefits were/are measured in monetary terms. Although in many ways it is a highly progressive ethic (and was seen as such in the 19th century to inspire public reforms such as the putting of sewerage underground in cities), it has been criticised by many thinkers for various reasons. Nevertheless it remains a powerful basis for much public decision-making e.g. in the sphere of development.

It can be criticised both because of its maximising norms and because of its narrow conception of the 'good' to be promoted. Maximising policies can for instance do injustice to marginalized peoples whose voices may be lost in the desire to promote hydro-power from big dam projects (like the Tonga people displaced when the Kariba dam was built) and thus sacrificing minorities for the 'greater good': had those voices been heard properly, different decisions would or might be taken. Likewise many development projects work with an oversimplified 'metric' of well being in terms of *individual* well-being and well-being understood in narrow economic terms. Forest dwellers resisting the incursion of logging companies (apart from wider issues of social justice) simply do not have their real interests (bound up with their cultural identity and their relationship to their forest/land which they occupy) properly heard, given the logic of utilitarian rationality that tends to predominate in the thinking of multinational and government departments. It should be noted that not all utilitarian thinking is inimical to the marginalized; in the hands of some writers like Peter Singer utilitarian arguments can be used to justify wealth redistribution; for instance, if increasing wealth has diminishing marginal utility, then the wealthy ought to donate their spare wealth to help improve the position of the poor (see e.g. Singer 1971). Our criticism above is based on common applications of utilitarianism, rather that the heart of the theory itself.

Libertarianism: another common approach is that of libertarianism. This stresses the centrality of liberty, particularly economic liberty. The basic moral injunction is to respect other people's right to liberty, and similarly the legal framework, both nationally and internationally, should allow maximum liberty for individuals and groups of individuals (in associations like business companies) to operate in a free market (an influential modern exponent was Nozick 1974). This ethic of the free market is dominant at the present time. It is quite generally disastrous from the perspective of the marginalized (and indeed poor countries generally). It is disastrous for many reasons, but put very simply, it both leads to aggressive economic operations in poor countries (profit making in rural areas in which poor people's interests are either ignored or misunderstood) and leads to a rejection of the rationale for aid programmes. It also like utilitarianism operate with a very westernised, individualistic conception of well-being which simply does not fit the circumstances of poorer people.

Westphalian Internationalism: this refers to the dominant paradigm of international relations for the last three hundred years or so. It is an approach which whilst accepting that there is an international moral framework of mutual respect for the sovereignty of other nation-states, tends to justify within that framework the pursuit of national interests as the basis of foreign policy including foreign economic trading and investment (see e.g. Bull 1977; Beitz 1979). It is a model of the world which has been encouraged via strongly normative conceptions of citizenship as the primary identity of individuals within their own countries, and thus via a

internally justifying logic whereby democratic governments are primarily charged with protection of the own nationals' interests, there is a relatively light regard for the fate of others elsewhere, not least the marginalized in poorer countries. Aid programmes of course exist (and reflects limited sympathies of citizens in the North) but are not very extensive, nor do countries do very well in their economic policies internationally since there are ways which could benefit poorer countries much more (like getting rid of trade-distorting subsidies in rich countries whilst insisting that poor countries get rid of theirs).

Instrumental Anthropocentrism: fourthly, there pervades much ethical thinking amongst those who determine foreign policy and determine the policies of business companies operating all over the world, what we shall call an instrumental anthropocentrism. By this we mean an approach to the natural world according to which the resources of the natural world are simply there to be used or exploited for economic or material advantage. We call this *instrumental* anthropocentrism as opposed to anthropocentrism as such because one of the approaches contrasted to it is a more enlightened anthropocentrism which includes within it a recognition of the importance of a respectful relationship to the natural world are partly constitutive of human well-being (see e.g. Matthews 1989). We do not merely or indeed primarily refer to aesthetic or recreational appreciation of nature, but centrally to the fact that for many people, particularly poor people in the rural south, there is an intimate relationship to their own bit of nature which for them is in a strong sense their *home* ('oikos'). Consider the approach of the women who hugged trees in the Chipko movement in India. Another approach to the natural world is one that goes beyond these anthropocentric approaches and is a form of biocentrism or ecocentrism i.e. a view that there is independent value in living things and/or wholes within nature (such as ecosystems) (see e.g. Attfield 1984). The dominant instrumental view is dangerous for many reasons, but not least because it is again oblivious to the environmental needs and perspectives of very poor people.

In the above sketch of four dominant ethical paradigms, we have attempted to indicate how each of them contributes to the normative framework within which the poor remain or become marginalized. The international framework, maintained because it is legitimated in this way, has a powerful determining effect on the life-prospects of the poor, not least the marginalized poor. However much ethical dialogue at the grass roots level gets established, it will not make much difference unless the global ethical framework changes, i.e. if the combination of ethical approaches indicated above continue to hold sway. Actually this contrast is somewhat misleading, because the general adoption of the use of ethical dialogue at grass roots level is unlikely to occur *unless* there is a change in the global ethical framework. Whether the latter comes about itself through dialogue or in other ways (We happen to think it needs to be a combination of both dialogic and monologic reasoning), it is a prerequisite of real success at the lower levels as well.

There are however two strategies for responding to the inappropriateness of the dominant ethical paradigms:

> (i) Reject these ethical positions and their implied universalism in favour of some form of relativism

> (ii) Develop a more nuanced cosmopolitanism or global ethic

(c) An examination of the relativist response

A common response amongst those who are poor/marginalised and those seek to speak on their behalf is to reject universal morality in favour of ethical relativism (see e.g. Wong 1984); in order to stress local values, indigenous knowledge, communal values, ecological values. Development has either to be culturally defined, or rejected altogether as part of the hegemonic discourse (e.g. Sachs 1992).

This response is tempting (because it makes something of the evident truth that values do vary so some extent from society to society and that what is appropriate to development in one country may not be appropriate in another country), but it is to be resisted. Ethical relativism (the thesis that there are no universal values, only values with are defined within particular moral traditions) needs to be distinguished from pluralism (the thesis that they are diverse values and norms alongside possibility of there being some kind of universal ethical framework as well).

If ethical relativism is right, then we have the following problems:

(i) There is the limitation that insofar as the ethical perspective of a poor community is one internal to that community, then it cannot be addressed coherently to outsiders, or even properly taken up by sympathetic outsiders (because they belong to other moral communities).

(ii) No universal status of being a human being can be appealed to. Maybe we are all human in *biological* terms, but the idea of a human being as having normative significance e.g. that suffering is bad for a human being, that being deceived undermines our dignity as rational beings, is entirely lost since nothing can be said about human beings as such in terms of values and norms. So someone who wants to advocate the importance of local values in development has nothing to advocate *to others*.

(iii) No basis for international responsibility is available since there is no global moral community within which responsibility might exist; we may hope for assistance from someone outside our society but we have no basis for saying that he has an obligation to do so since what we say provides no basis for his accepting this. So any argument that *causally* the marginalized are so because of either indifference and lack of aid or through oppression and harsh international economic practices, is stripped of any basis for *normatively* condemning what other countries do or do not do in relation to their condition.

(iv) There is also the dilemma re tolerance. Although relativists have sometimes prided themselves as being advocates of tolerance towards differing values elsewhere, they actually have no basis for recommending this as a universal value *to others*, unless they abandon their relativism and claim that tolerance is a *universal* value. (For further discussion of relativism see e.g. Borchert & Stewart 1986; Dower 1998)

(c) An appropriate global ethic

A better response is to develop an ethic that is more adequate to meet the needs of poor/marginalised people and at the same time is universal and cosmopolitan (i.e. includes transnational responsibility). Here we would advocate the idea of solidarist pluralism or pluralist responsibility – that is transnational solidarity or responsibility combined with a respect for plurality of cultural expression of the core values of human beings. We believe there are sound intellectual arguments for this kind of ethic, but it can also be commended as the kind of ethic which many in the international community are committed to accept (through convergence and global ethical dialogue) (see e.g. Kim 1999; Dower 1998).

In the last twenty years there has been a transformation in the kind of thinking that is going on about the basic idea of *development*, as being a thoroughly *normative* concept, involving the idea of progress according to a wide range of criteria. Prominent in this regard has been the work over many years of Amartya Sen, culminating in his *Development as Freedom* (Sen 1999) (and his getting the Nobel Peace Prize). For Sen development is essentially the increase of real *freedoms* (interpreted in broadest sense). This normative approach on the one hand gets away from the dominant paradigm of development of centrally being about economic

growth (leading to a lot of the errors of growth-directed market-driven development), and on the other hand helping to bring out the point that whilst there is a central core of norms relating both to development itself and to the international context for aid, trade and investment, what is appropriate to development may depend on context, local traditions and beliefs. Development discourse combines both the universal and the particular (see Gasper 2004: especially ch. 9).

(d) The *Earth Charter* (2000)

We now need to say a little bit more about a document we have referred a number of times, as an illustration of an appropriate global ethic. The *Earth Charter* is appropriate for two kinds of reasons: (i) it is itself a product of dialogue over a number of years (and gained wide-spread support), and can form the basis for further dialogue, because it provides a full range of values which can inform other dialogues on more specific issues and does so in a way that encourages interpretation and expansion in seeing what it means in more specific contexts; (ii) its core values are in any case the right values for a global ethic, and its validity is independent of the dialogic process.

The *Earth Charter*, like the idea of sustainable development, tries to combine concern for the environment with concerns for development/social concerns including poverty.

Some characteristics of it are:

> (i) It has the following key elements: respect for nature; social justice; human rights; democracy; non-violence; respect for cultural diversity (expanded and interpreted in numerous sub-principles) (see Appendix 3 for the full text).
> (ii) It assumes the idea global responsibility/the idea of being a citizen of the world. It accepts common but differentiated responsibilities, viz. that those with power and resources have greater responsibility to promote global goods than others.
> (iii) Its emphasis on *quality* of life rather than material affluence dissociates 'human development' from economic growth.
> (iv) It constitutes a global ethic, both as an ethic shared by many people throughout the world and as a set of principles that can be endorsed by thinkers from their own particular standpoints / worldviews.
> (v) As such it is acceptable to people of many different backgrounds but not all: to enlightened anthropocentrists and biocentrists; to many religious believers and many secular thinkers; to western and non-western perspectives (since it was the product of widespread consultation). But resistance from e.g. libertarians, internationalists in international relations theory (as explained above), instrumental anthropocentrists, some Utilitarians (though not others – it depends on how the theory is expanded and applied), fundamentalists (who believe that the promotion of their particular worldview is both important and has priority over co-operation over agreed global goods), and relativists.
> (vi) Finally it provides a public document for endorsement and thus makes it easier for many to see themselves as subscribing to a shared global ethic.
> (vii) It is of course an idealistic statement: but is this an impediment to its utility? It provides criteria for assessing progress, and more particularly provides the framework upon which many dialogues involving the marginalized can take place. This is because if the parties agree that the framework of values is appropriate, then the interests and perspectives of the marginalized will be properly heard and responded to.

12. Some applications of ethical dialogue

Here we use the analysis given above to comment on several case studies in which IIED has been involved (see appendix 2 for summary of these as given by IIED).

The timber industry in Indonesia illustrates many of the problems faced by marginalized forest dwellers since powerful timber companies engage in deforestation which undermines the traditional livelihood of the people living in them.

Clearly what is causing the problems for the marginalized is a combination of: (a) sheer economic selfishness of companies interested in making good profits (with the possibility that government is actually unwilling (rather than simply unable) to stop this process); (b) a justification by the companies for what they do as contributing to economic development and on the basis of concession rights; (c) the imposition of a certain kind of development paradigm which ignores a way of life in relation to forests which both works at a practical level but is also of symbolic cultural value to the marginalized people; (d) the absence of any genuine co-ordination process which would bring out the voices of those affected.

These causes are linked of course. The cynical may regard (a) as the root cause and see the other factors as following from (a). Others may find independent influences in (b), (c) and (d) (and many might see (d) itself as an expression of (c) since if one accepts (c) one might think there is no need to consult!

Now if (a) is the root cause, then it is difficult to see how the dialogue process let alone ethical dialogue process can get going in the first place. This process will be avoided or if public pressure is brought to bear to at least consult the 'stakeholders', the chances are that the company (and the government if it is linked to this) will engage in 'dialogue' for form's sake but not be really motivated. This reminds us that however far dialogue as procedure for discussion or negotiation is introduced (and the 'ground rules' for listening etc.) are agreed, it will not really work unless the parties participating including the powerful ones really want it to work. (Conversely it is worth noting that a company that did *not* engage in dialogue could exercise corporate responsibility in its actions because key players in the organisation had in whatever way come to accept a certain kind of ethic that took seriously the well-being of stakeholders (in the widest sense).)

So in this case what is really important is the development of a background moral culture in which companies come to see that this to not the right way to go about business – and this leads to the importance of ethical dialogue at other levels.

But the importance of critical dialogue at other levels is not just about the motivation of businesses, it is about the whole agenda of international development, insofar as it is based on the libertarian free market rationale (the inadequacy of which needs to be recognised, as we indicated above), linked to a limited recognition of claims of social justice or human rights for protection for those living marginalized existences, the supposed importance of legal claims (the company might come to see that legal concession rights are not the trump card it seems to be), the one-sided nature of development thinking which fails to recognise adequately the importance of non-growth criteria of well-being, the failure to recognise the traditional relationship to land (including, for some, forests) and the general importance of traditional cultures (which are not simply an obstacle to 'progress' but important dimensions to well-being). So again what is at issue in this case (and many like it) is the development of an adequate global ethic framework.

But the third element of this that needs to be stressed is that in this higher level ethical debate/discourse (ongoing of course not linked to particular times and events), part of the global ethic which emerges is one which acknowledges the fact that the *way* to get ethically adequate decisions at grass roots levels is precisely to engage in ethical dialogue or at least dialogue informed by the strong ethical norms we identified at the beginning. So the answer is

that ethical dialogue would clearly help in such a situation, but really the key issue is how to create the conditions in the first place in which ethical dialogue would be genuinely accepted by the key actors in their dealings with the marginalized.

We now look more briefly at two further cases.

The case of Sahelian pastoralism in Ethiopia throws up slightly different problems in that they are actually *consulted*, but this does not allow them to continue to live through unimpeded access to extensive areas of grazing, partly because such access conflicts with the increased privatisation of land and partly because the consultation is not real 'consultation' involving real participation, but only sufficient to give the pretext that the pastoralists had given a mandate to the changes which do not really reflect their aspirations. Now here again one can see that the first reason (the determination to develop land under privatisation and exclusive control of areas which is a slap in the face to what is seen as old fashioned approaches to land) really lies at the heart of the second reason, since really responding to their aspirations would mean having to question or limit land privatisation. Clearly genuine dialogue (and real listening to their voices) would help enormously, but the efficacy of such dialogue depends on the other parties to the dialogue not merely taking the positions of the pastoralists seriously (taking a universal ethic in which all people matter and matter equally), but also understanding that there are authentic ways of living human lives which do not relate to the earth via determinate and exclusively controlled little bits of the earth – an idea which is central to the western mind set concerning property rights and the assumptions that development of course has to proceed via such determinate control of land.

The case study in which the basic needs of local people in the River Salee and Chambord areas of Grenada are losing out to development of tourist facilities brings us back the international dimension very clearly. At one level this is a conflict between the developers who want to develop tourist facilities in order to make money and those who need the land to remain agricultural to provide for basic needs. The absence of a National Land Use Register indicates that the government is either unwilling or unable to control these developments so at to protect the position of the very poor who need this land. Clearly one level here where dialogue would be useful would be at government level, either through representatives of the poor people themselves or sympathetic NGOs, to get the government to see that an uncontrolled situation is leading to the economically powerful riding roughshod over local poor people. But at another level there is a need for dialogue to consider the very basis of the development of tourism. From a global ethics point of view, there is no blanket condemnation of tourism, but there must be disquiet about certain forms of tourism development: (a) if tourism displaces local livelihoods and reduces the capacity of local people to provide for their basic necessities through the agricultural use of the land for food production; (b) if tourism imposes disproportionate environmental costs; apart from the ubiquitous costs of global tourism in terms of the carbon emission of global transport especially by air, tourism may impact on local environments, both by destroying areas of beauty and by causing a relocation in local food-growing activities (thus necessitating the further unnecessary transportation of food etc.). But these kinds of considerations which should lead to checking rampant tourism development will come from the development of a certain kind of global thinking, not primarily in the country itself, but in all parts of the world where people are potentially consumers of global tourism. Again this thinking will be encouraged by the development of ethical dialogue at the global level – as part of the potentially wide and ongoing conversations of global citizens.

13. Conclusion

This Report has examined the nature of dialogue and especially ethical dialogue as a tool for improving the prospects of marginalized people in the world. It has suggested a range of ways in which and levels at which dialogue can be used both by the marginalized and by those who

support them to combat widespread indifference to, ignorance of or active oppression of the marginalized. In addition to the role of ethical dialogue at grass-roots level, there is an important role for ethical dialogue at the global level in forging an appropriate global ethic, and the very fact that dialogic processes contribute to this adds strength to such global norms. Such norms however also have validity for each supporter of them, independent of the fact of consensus; indeed global ethics dialogue would never have a basis without prior worldviews to inform it. On the other hand it has also to be recognised that the critical issue is whether the use of dialogue and especially the genuine use of it commends itself to actors. All too often where the marginalized suffer because of the policies of powerful actors in the development process, it is because of attitudes which are inimical to dialogue in the first place. So do we need another level of dialogue to get actors to accept the rightness of dialogue? Sooner or later the case for dialogue rest of considerations which lie beyond dialogue. Although this Report has gestured in the direction of such ethical foundations, it has been a report on the uses of ethical dialogue, not one on the foundations of ethics. But the improvement of the fate of the marginalized peoples of the world rest partly on this more fundamental level of enquiry.

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Appendix 1

Process issues: further reflections on the dialogic process and why ethical dialogue will also help

Here we reflect on further issues in respect to the general question: *what* makes ethical dialogue important? These thoughts are added as an appendix because the main task of the Report has been completed, and they are of a more theoretical interest.

One approach is to say that dialogue is an end in itself. Now this might have a narrow interpretation and a broad interpretation.

The narrow interpretation would be that dialogue itself as a process of people conversing with each other in attentive, respectful and constructively critical ways is valuable in itself irrespective of what result comes from it. It might be seen as constitutive of the good life. Like the more general idea of communication, these activities seem central to what makes us fully human. This may be granted. However unlike many forms of communication (e.g. angry or coercive communication), dialogue has many of the hallmarks of positive human communication.

This narrow claim, while important and true, does not get us very far in our current concerns, since its value for its own sake is completely independent of whatever results it might come up with. What we need is a broader claim and that is that the process of dialogue generates outcomes which are validated in virtue of its processes. An agreement produced by dialogue has validity because the agreed outcome of a process with certain validating features. In much the same way we often regard other processes such as democratic outcomes as have a legitimacy because they come out of the democratic process.

We have however to distinguish between a strong form of the thesis and a weak form of the thesis. The strong form would be that whatever emerged as a result of a properly conducted dialogue just is right in virtue of that process. There is no *independently* correct outcome. The right outcome ethically is just what is produced by this procedure (c.f. Habermasian discourse ethics).

The weak thesis is that dialogue is important both in itself and as getting results that have *some* validity because of the process, but that it is also a means to results that can be assessed as right or good independently of the process itself. Unless this is acknowledged, then, for reasons already partly indicated, the effectiveness of dialogue as a way of enhancing the position of the week is much reduced.

The problem with the earlier weak position is briefly this. Either dialogue objectively generates what is morally right or it does not. If it is seen to be objectively a generator of what is right, then it is not clear why we should not also hold that other things are also objectively right or good. Indeed there is a paradox about not also saying this about other things which is parallel to the paradox of democracy: if we only ought to do what a democratic outcome determines, then there could never be an independent input into the democratic process of first order opinions about what ought to be done. (My independent judgement that nuclear weapons are wrong is not disqualified by the fact that a democratic government is elected to maintain them; without prior first order beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of nuclear weapons and about many other matters, there would not be a basis in the first place of democratic decision about these matters). In any case anyone concerned about the poor/marginalised has a moral concern about the position of the poor/marginalised, and this is prior to and independent of what he hopes will be the outcome of dialogical process.

If on the other hand, dialogue and its outcomes are merely valued by a thinker on subjectivist grounds, then this position is doubly problematic vis a vis our subject matter. If he really does think that what ought to be is simply a function of dialogue (democratic processes etc.) he could have no prior or independent valuation of the evils of poverty/marginalization, so his motivation for advocating dialogue is undermined; and second, as we indicated earlier, his view will cut no ice with someone else who does not share his evaluation.

A further question is raised: suppose it is clear that the dialogic method can improve the position of the poor, then there is the prior task of persuading the target audience (governments, companies etc.) to use this method in the first place.

If we are to escape an infinite regress (we need dialogue to persuade them of the value of dialogue, but then we need dialogue to ….), something else has to get dialogue onto the agenda of negotiation.

This will have to be the assertion of certain substantive normative claims about the value of dialogue itself as a reasonable way of getting fair decisions made. At one level this will have to be an appeal to the weak but widely held belief in the target groups in the rightness of addressing the issue of poverty coupled with the case for dialogue as a way of making that broad commitment more concrete and serious (a bit like John Rawls' moving from weak and widely held assumptions to a more specific conception of justice: Rawls 1971). At another level it will be about using certain second-order techniques of moral thought (to be recommended *within* the dialogue process too – see above) to persuade actors that this method is the right one to use (e.g. if you were in a weak position would you favour using the dialogue method to get a fair hearing/deal?)

Appendix 2

Case studies of marginalized groups who might wish to use ethical dialogue

Summaries of case studies known to IIED prepared by Duncan Macqueen (3 from 9 given were selected for comment).

1. Social conflict over forest management between more and less powerful groups at the mercy of international trade Country: Indonesia The timber industry in Indonesia has boomed through international trade supplying Asian economic expansion - but deforestation has also reached unprecedented levels as timber barons clear forest and reinvest in other more profitable businesses. Over the last ten years, conflict over natural resource management has been increasing in Indonesia, as in many other parts of the world. The government has been unable to deal effectively with protracted conflict between companies (who claim concession rights over the forest) and adjacent communities (who use the adjacent forests for subsistence food, shelter, fuelwood and so on). Although many conflicts have recently been brought to court, this has not solved the root problem of land allocation to powerful groups without adequate consultation of those affected, so that there continue to be many cases still going on after three generations. How can communities strengthen their rights against the march of economic development and international trade backed by often corrupt links between big business and politicians?

2. Tensions between common land use systems and the tendency to privatisation of land Country: Ethiopia Sahelian Pastoralists traditionally require unimpeded access to extensive areas of grazing land. Increasing privatisation of land backed by exclusive policies are presenting serious impediments to traditional ways of life. Pastoralists are excluded from policy discussion, policy formulation and policy implementation around land, local development, poverty reduction and agriculture in Ethiopia. Although participatory processes are now officially part of all development interventions with pastoralists, the reality is more consultation than participation - leading to a worrying scenario in which actions thought to have the mandate of pastoralist groups do not reflect their aspirations at all. Should pastoralists simply acquiesce to the privatisation of land and change their lifestyles accordingly?

3. Luxury needs versus basic necessities Country: Grenada. The agricultural livelihoods of people in the River Sallee and Chambord areas of Grenada are threatened by plans for development of tourist facilities. In the absence of a national Land Use Policy, it is difficult to ensure that the land is retained in agriculture. How might ethical dialogue be used to arbitrate between the basic needs of local people and the broader benefits to the economy that might come from expanding tourism?

Appendix 3

THE EARTH CHARTER

(adopted by the Earth Council in March 2000)

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 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.

PRINCIPLES

I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE

1. *Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.*
> *a. Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.*
> *b. Affirm faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and in the intellectual, artistic, ethical, and spiritual potential of humanity.*

2. *Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.*
> *a. Accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources comes the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people.*
> *b. Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.*

3. *Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.*
> *a. Ensure that communities at all levels guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and provide everyone an opportunity to realize his or her full potential.*
> *b. Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible.*

4. *Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.*
> *a. Recognize that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations.*
> *b. Transmit to future generations values, traditions, and institutions that support the long-term flourishing of Earth's human and ecological communities.*

In order to fulfil these four broad commitments, it is necessary to:

II. ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY

5. *Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.*
> *a. Adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives.*
> *b. Establish and safeguard viable nature and biosphere reserves, including wild lands and marine areas, to protect Earth's life support systems, maintain biodiversity, and preserve our natural heritage.*
> *c. Promote the recovery of endangered species and ecosystems.*
> *d. Control and eradicate non-native or genetically modified organisms harmful to native species and the environment, and prevent introduction of such harmful organisms.*
> *e. Manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.*
> *f. Manage the extraction and use of non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels in ways that minimize depletion and cause no serious environmental damage.*

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

> a. Take action to avoid the possibility of serious or irreversible environmental harm even when scientific knowledge is incomplete or inconclusive.
> b. Place the burden of proof on those who argue that a proposed activity will not cause significant harm, and make the responsible parties liable for environmental harm.
> c. Ensure that decision making addresses the cumulative, long-term, indirect, long distance, and global consequences of human activities.
> d. Prevent pollution of any part of the environment and allow no build-up of radioactive, toxic, or other hazardous substances.
> e. Avoid military activities damaging to the environment.

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

> a. Reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used in production and consumption systems, and ensure that residual waste can be assimilated by ecological systems.
> b. Act with restraint and efficiency when using energy, and rely increasingly on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
> c. Promote the development, adoption, and equitable transfer of environmentally sound technologies.
> d. Internalize the full environmental and social costs of goods and services in the selling price, and enable consumers to identify products that meet the highest social and environmental standards.
> e. Ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction.
> f. Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.

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

> a. Support international scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, with special attention to the needs of developing nations.
> b. Recognize and preserve the traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures that contribute to environmental protection and human well-being.
> c. Ensure that information of vital importance to human health and environmental protection, including genetic information, remains available in the public domain.

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.
> b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.

> c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labor standards.
> d. Require multinational corporations and international financial organizations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

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

> a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.
> b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.
> c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.

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.*

> a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic or social origin.
> b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.
> c. Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfil their essential role in creating sustainable societies.
> d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

IV. DEMOCRACY, NONVIOLENCE, AND PEACE

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

> a. Uphold the right of everyone to receive clear and timely information on environmental matters and all development plans and activities which are likely to affect them or in which they have an interest.
> b. Support local, regional and global civil society, and promote the meaningful participation of all interested individuals and organizations in decision making.
> c. Protect the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and dissent.
> d. Institute effective and efficient access to administrative and independent judicial procedures, including remedies and redress for environmental harm and the threat of such harm.
> e. Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.
> f. Strengthen local communities, enabling them to care for their environments, and assign environmental responsibilities to the levels of government where they can be carried out most effectively.

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

> a. Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development.
> b. Promote the contribution of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences in sustainability education.
> c. Enhance the role of the mass media in raising awareness of ecological and social challenges.
> d. Recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living.

15. *Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.*
> *a. Prevent cruelty to animals kept in human societies and protect them from suffering.*
> *b. Protect wild animals from methods of hunting, trapping, and fishing that cause extreme, prolonged, or avoidable suffering.*
> *c. Avoid or eliminate to the full extent possible the taking or destruction of non-targeted species.*

16. *Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.*
> *a. Encourage and support mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among all peoples and within and among nations.*
> *b. Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflict and use collaborative problem solving to manage and resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.*
> *c. Demilitarize national security systems to the level of a non-provocative defense posture, and convert military resources to peaceful purposes, including ecological restoration.*
> *d. Eliminate nuclear, biological, and toxic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.*
> *e. Ensure that the use of orbital and outer space supports environmental protection and peace.*
> *f. Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.*

THE WAY FORWARD

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. To fulfil this promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the Charter.

This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. 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 their own 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.

Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential for effective governance.

In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the United Nations, fulfil their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of Earth Charter principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.

Let ours be a time remembered for 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.