

Toward an Ecological Civilization: A Path to Justice, Peace, and Care for Earth

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The world is in agony.... Peace eludes us—the planet is being destroyed—neighbors live in fear—women and men are estranged from each other—children die.... We affirm...there already exist ancient guidelines for human behavior which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order. We declare: We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water, and soil.

—Declaration Toward a Global Ethic, Parliament of the World's Religions, Chicago, U.S.A., 4 September 1993

Earth is an interconnected whole. What we do to the Earth, we do to ourselves. Earth is our home, we have nowhere else to go—and time is running out.... We believe that the opportunity to make a difference entails the responsibility to make a difference.... The future we embrace will be a new ecological civilization and a world of peace, justice and sustainability, with the nourishing of the diversity of life. We will build this future as one human family within the greater Earth community.

—Declaration on Climate Change, Parliament of the World's Religions, Salt Lake City, 13 October 2015

These ringing words from the Parliament of the World's Religions affirm essential truths foundational to the human future. We are a species in troubled relationship with one another and Earth. Yet we are possessed of the capacity, as well as the responsibility, to choose a future of peace, justice, and care for one another and Earth—an ecological civilization—grounded in the common core values of the world's religions as framed by the Parliament's mission and vision statements.

It is a bold and challenging commitment that requires a profound global transformation in our understanding of what and who we are, and in

Mission Statement of the Parliament of the World's Religions

The Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities and foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions in order to achieve a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

To accomplish this, we invite individuals and communities who are equally invested in attaining this goal.

the values and institutions that guide our common path. The world's religious and spiritual communities are positioned to play an essential, defining role in furthering the awakening to the crisis at hand, its source in a deeply flawed values choices, and the path to human species maturity and a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

A Defining Choice

For most of the human experience, we were fragmented into isolated tribes and states with varied cultures and institutions. Some met the needs of all in peace with one another and in balanced relationship with nature. Others created cruel divisions between brutal rulers and enslaved masses while depleting the essential resources on which life depends. The differences along that broad spectrum demonstrate that we are a species of many possibilities and the ability to choose among them. We are awakening to the grim reality that our current choices lead to potential species self-extinction and destruction of Earth's capacity to support complex life.

Human caused climate disruption, loss of fertile soil, diminishing supplies of clean freshwater, disappearing forests, and collapsing fisheries are among the lead indicators of unfolding environmental collapse. According to the Global Footprint Network, we humans currently consume at a rate [1.7 times what Earth's regenerative capacity can sustain](#). Yet we continue to make aggregate growth in consumption as measured by Gross Domestic Product (GDP) our defining measure of economic performance.

Refugee pressures, hate speech, family breakdown, mental illness, drug addiction, suicides, political gridlock are all symptoms of social breakdown resulting from a combination of environmental collapse and a grotesque and growing wealth gap. The majority of humans find themselves thrust into lives of daily desperation in a world in which [six individuals](#) now control financial assets equal to those of 3.8 billion people, the poorest half of humanity. It is for good reason that public confidence in the institutions on which we depend for our wellbeing is in decline and political demagoguery is on the rise.

How did we—a species of such extraordinary potential with the capacity to choose its future—go so terribly wrong? Pope Francis captures it in his Apostolic Exhortation [Evangelii Gaudium](#): “the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose.”

Vision Statement of the Parliament of the World's Religions

The Parliament envisions “a just, peaceful and sustainable world in which:

- *Religious and spiritual communities live in harmony and contribute to a better world from their riches of wisdom and compassion.*
- *Religious and cultural fears and hatreds are replaced with understanding and respect.*
- *People everywhere come to know and care for their neighbors.*
- *The richness of human and religious diversity is woven into the fabric of communal, civil, societal and local life.*
- *The world's most powerful and influential institutions move beyond narrow self-interest to realize common good.*
- *The Earth and all life are cherished, protected, healed and restored*
- *All people commit to living out their highest values and aspirations.”*

We embrace money as our defining common value and competition for power as our dominant mode of relating, and monopolistic, private-purpose, profit-seeking transnational corporations as our defining institutions. We treat rural areas as expendable sources of cheap resources and places to dump our wastes. And we design cities for cars rather than for people, which contributes to climate change and further adds to our separation from one another and nature.

We now confront the fundamental question of our existence. For what purpose have we been granted the gift of life as spiritually aware beings with an extraordinary capacity for conscious agency? Is it to worship money as we exploit one another and Earth to grow the fortunes of the already richest people ever to live on Earth? Or is it to support one another and Earth in advancing creation's creative unfolding toward ever greater complexity, beauty, awareness, and possibility?

To Know Creation's Purpose, Observe What Creation Does

Recent advances in scientific knowledge of the unfolding of the universe since the initial blast of energy we call the big bang were unavailable to the great shamans, philosophers, prophets, and scientists of our human past. Our new knowledge is a source of new insight into the purpose of creation's unfolding and humanity's intended role in that unfolding, all of which is relevant to our search for our human pathway to an Ecological Civilization.

The science story of creation's unfolding bears remarkable resemblance to the Genesis story of the Christian bible, but with far greater detail and deeper understanding of the processes involved. Science estimates the universe was born some 13.8 billion years ago, when a giant energy cloud burst forth in a blinding flash of quantum energy particles. With time, these particles formed into atoms that formed into complex molecules that joined to form stars and galaxies that gave birth to planets—one of which gave birth to carbon-based life.

Evolutionary biologists pick up from this story to tell us that some 3.6 billion years ago, the first living micro-organisms appeared on Earth—organisms so tiny as to be invisible to our human eye. As their numbers, diversity, and complexity increased, they organized themselves into a planetary-scale system comprised of trillions of trillions of microscopic choice-making living organisms. Working together with Earth's geological processes they filtered excess carbon and a vast variety of toxins from Earth's air, waters, and soils and sequestered them deep underground. In so doing, this grand alliance of seemingly primitive species, created the environmental conditions suited to the emergence of far larger, more complex, intelligent, and self-aware organisms.

To this day, with no discernible source of central direction, the countless organisms of Earth's living community work in symbiotic relationship with one another to continuously renew Earth's soils rivers, aquifers, fisheries, forests, and grasslands while maintaining global climatic balance and the composition of Earth's atmosphere to meet their individual and collective needs.

We humans are a product of that journey. To the best of our knowledge, we represent creation's most daring experiment in the creative evolutionary potentials of a species with

a self-aware reflective consciousness and an extraordinary capacity for agency. Perhaps the most distinctive of all our capacities is that we are aware that we are aware.

As did the earliest microbes, all species contribute to shaping the life of the place where they live. But only we humans can determine our impacts as a conscious collective choice. As Earth's dominant species, we now shape the destiny of Earth and all who call it home. Yet we act as irresponsible children, unmindful of the responsibilities that go with the choices we make.

Our current choices deny the essentials of our humanity, drive the collapse of environmental, social, and governance systems, and threaten human extinction and destruction of Earth's capacity to support life as we know it. With the consequences playing out with alarming speed, we are on a path to commit the ultimate human sin against creation.

To reverse course and achieve the long denied human dream of a world of peace, beauty, and spiritual abundance for all will require a deep cultural and institutional transformation that aligns with our nature as living beings born of and nurtured by a living Earth. To succeed, we must get our story right.

Getting Our Story Right

The earliest humans developed a capacity for symbolic thought and communication that increasingly distinguished them from their species ancestors. With time we created increasingly sophisticated narratives to communicate and share our understanding of reality. Shared beliefs became the basis of our ability to self-organize in ever increasing numbers.

With rare exception, we simply accepted the narrative of the group into which we were born as the true reality. This can be a powerful asset. If we get our narrative right, it allows us to develop coherent societies of virtually unlimited scale.

It also, however, leaves us susceptible to manipulation by those who shape a society's narrative to serve their own exclusive ends. Our current human arrogance, capacity for self-destruction, and vulnerability to manipulation all trace to narratives crafted to advance the agendas of imperial rulers seeking to legitimate the exploitation of people and planet over the past 5,000 years. We once knew those rulers as kings and emperors. We now know them as corporate CEOs and Wall Street financiers.

Our human current misadventure traces to the deceptions of a narrative called neoliberalism. It is an ideology taught in many economics courses as science, and constantly reinforced by corporate media. It assures us that money is wealth, making money creates wealth, the individual is supreme, and there is no community interest beyond individual financial interests. Therefore, the well-being of all is best served when we each seek to maximize our individual financial gain. These demonstrably false premises deny our dependence on community and the offerings of a healthy living Earth, our needs for love and meaning, government's essential role in securing the public interest, and the fact that money is only a number of no intrinsic utility in meeting any human need.

Neoliberalism is the ideology of capitalism—a system in which the few profit from exploiting the many by controlling their access to a means of living. Its values and logic are embedded into the global public consciousness through carefully chosen “memes” — constantly repeated phrases such as “economic growth,” “individual freedom,” “the free market,” “free trade,” “investors,” “multinational corporations,” and “limited government.” Each is a code phrase that prioritizes private financial gain over the well-being of people and Earth.

“Economic growth” prioritizes market transactions that grow GDP over self-care and gifting, which do not. “Individual freedom” affirms the individual is paramount and dismisses community. “The free market” (in contrast to rule-based, ethical markets) celebrates freedom for corporations to do whatever maximizes profit, free from public rules, oversight, and concern for the common good. “Free trade” (in contrast to fair and balanced trade) means giving transnational corporations unrestricted access to and ultimately control of labor, resources, and money to use in whatever way maximizes short-term profit without regard for social and environmental consequences.

“Investors” purifies the image of speculators who seek to profit from financial games and bubbles free from the obligation of producing anything of value in return.

“Multinational” corporations (in contrast to “transnational” corporations) suggests that corporations that do business in several nations are rooted in each. This meme obscures the reality that most such transnational corporations bear no allegiance to the interests of any persons or nations other than absentee shareholders and everywhere seek to avoid paying their fair share of taxes. “Limited government” (in contrast to democratically accountable government) translates into low taxes for the rich and dependence for the poor on privatized services only the rich can afford.

The appearance of a seemingly near universal acceptance of an ideology so deeply and obviously flawed rests on the limitation of the narrative of the scientific revolution and the enlightenment. Focused on explaining reality to observable phenomena that could be quantified and described in mathematical formula, they fostered a narrative in which all experience could be explained by some combination of material mechanism and chance.

In the resulting narrative there was no place for conscious, intelligent awareness. This had the unintended consequence of stripping our lives of meaning and the responsibilities to one another and Earth inherent in our human agency. It thus prepared the way for an economic ideology devoted in those defining words of Pope Francis to “the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose.”

The remedy is simple in concept; daunting in application. It has two related elements. First, raise public consciousness of the fallacies and consequences of the neoliberal narrative and the memes by which it is promoted. Second, affirm the authentic narrative that resides in the heart of every psychologically healthy human, is taught by the world’s great religions, and is affirmed by indigenous knowledge and the leading edge of science. That narrative can be summarized as follows:

We are living beings born of and nurtured by a living Earth. We survive and thrive only through cooperative mutually nourishing relations with one another and the rest of living Earth’s community of life. Our physical and mental well-being depend on the wellbeing of the whole.

To compromise our humanity in the belief that money, a mere number, is the source of our well-being represents an act of monumental deception, collective stupidity, and suicidal insanity.

Naming Our Future

Latin Americans speak of *vivir bien* and *sumac kawasay* (good living), a commitment now enshrined in the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador. Africans speak of *ubuntu* (humanity), often translated as “I am because we are.” In recognition of our common dependence on and responsibility to living Earth, a New Zealand law grants rights of personhood to a river in response to appeals from the Maori people; and a court in India has taken the New Zealand law as precedent to grant similar status to the Ganges River.

The ruling party of China has built into its constitution a commitment to ecological civilization and declared that “nature should be respected, adapted to, and protected....” In his October 18, 2017 presentation to the party’s 19th National Congress, China’s President Xi Jinping affirmed this commitment and observed that:

“Man and nature form a community of life; we, as human beings, must respect nature, follow its ways, and protect it. Only by observing the laws of nature can mankind avoid costly blunders in its exploitation. Any harm we inflict on nature will eventually return to haunt us. This is a reality we have to face.”

In 2015, the Parliament of the World’s Religions issued a Declaration on Climate Change that spoke of an ecological civilization in these closing words:

“The future we embrace will be a new ecological civilization and a world of peace, justice and sustainability, with the flourishing of the diversity of life. We will build this future as one human family within the greater Earth community.”

A consortium of organizations connected to the Claremont School of Theology in California has presented 12 annual international forums exploring the global possibilities and philosophical foundations of an ecological civilization. An October 2018 conference in South Korea hosted by Seoul’s Mayor Park Won-soon will explore the role of the city in advancing this epic human transition.

Ecological civilization seems a fitting name for a future we seek. *Ecological* is broadly inclusive of all living beings. It puts the focus on the capacity of living organisms to self-organize in diverse, interlinked, and intrinsically symbiotic relationships to create the conditions essential to life. *Civilization* evokes the depth of the cultural and institutional transformation required to create a human future that is truly civil.

Use of the term civilization, however, requires a cautionary note. It has long been used by Imperial rulers to legitimate their expropriation and exploitation of the lands and labor of peoples they dismiss as “uncivilized”—peoples often far more civil than those who claim to be civilized. A true civilization that features civility among all parties on a global scale is a human aspiration yet to be fulfilled.

The Earth Charter's Guiding Principles

The Earth Charter is a statement of the moral principles suited to guiding us on the path to an ecological civilization. The Charter is the product of a process begun in 1987 when the Brundtland Commission called for a “new charter” to set “new norms” to guide the transition to a sustainable human future. In 1996, Maurice Strong, who served as Secretary-General of the 1992 UN Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro and Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet Union, created the Earth Charter Commission, which they co-chaired with three other leaders from Asia, Africa, and South America.

At their invitation, Steven Rockefeller, theologian, philosopher, and philanthropist, formed and led an international drafting committee that engaged in over three years of worldwide consultations with thousands of people of diverse races, cultures, religious traditions, and political leanings. The committee also engaged in a lengthy survey of relevant principles of international law. The product was the Earth Charter, a brief and inspiring declaration of fundamental ethical principles launched on June 29, 2000 at the Peace Palace in the Hague.

The Charter calls on humanity to respect the inherent worth of Earth's community of life, care for that community in all its diversity and interdependence, and recognize the inherent individual and collective dignity of all people. It reminds us that freedom, knowledge, and power carry a corresponding individual and collective responsibility to care for the common good.

The Charter further affirms that to fulfill this responsibility, we must secure Earth's living bounty and beauty, while creating democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful, celebrate diversity, and enable all people to achieve a secure, meaningful, and ecologically responsible livelihood now and for all generations to come.

Living Is Relating

Leading-edge life scientists are discovering that complex living organisms exist only in interconnected, multi-species communities of organisms that self-organize to create and maintain the conditions essential to their existence. Life depends on relationship; to live is to relate in continual exchange with the rest of life.

In so far as we can determine, life achieves its miracle of self-organization without any equivalent of the centralized command and control authority structures that characterize most formal human organizations. The relationships involved are so complex that we are only beginning to develop the language to discuss them. We may say that life organizes as breathtakingly complex polycentric holarchies—interdependent and often overlapping living whole-parts that work together to create and maintain yet greater living wholes.

These words are hard to fully comprehend. Yet the processes the words attempt to describe are so familiar that we take them for granted. Each human body is a self-organizing community of tens of trillions of ever-adapting, individual, decision-making living cells that create and maintain your organs, including your brain, heart, lungs, kidney, blood vessels, and beneficial microbiotic colonies. Together these interdependent, complex, and constantly active living parts manage continual exchanges

of energy, nutrients, water, and information through processes beyond your conscious awareness.

Each of your body's trillions of cells constantly balances its own needs with those of the community (the body) on which its own vitality and agency depend. All the while the community is accommodating the continual reproduction and death of individual cells, and adapting to changing external temperatures and varied inputs of food, air, and water.

Simultaneously, your body is healing physical damage parts and protecting itself and its members from an endless variety of toxins and pathogens while it responds to instructions from your conscious mind to contract and relax muscles as required to implement your choices for how you relate physically to others and Earth. Death comes when an organism's body no longer functions as an active self-organizing community. To deny the need for community is to deny the existence of life and the most fundamental aspect of our nature.

Just as each cell of the body is part of a larger interdependent whole called "self," we humans are part of a larger interdependent whole called Earth. Living Earth is itself a complex holarchy of interconnected whole-part eco-communities, each comprised of countless individual organisms.

Each organisms is engaged in the continuous exchange of energy, nutrients, water, and information to regenerate soils, aquifers, streams, and rivers, sequester excess carbons, toxins, and other wastes, capture solar energy, purify air, and stabilize weather and temperatures amid constantly changing flows of solar energy and available supplies of water and energy. Among their multitude of tasks, these self-organizing processes simultaneously control individual species populations to maintain the multi-species diversity essential to overall ecosystem health.

These processes are essential to our existence, health, and happiness. Yet we have come to relate to Earth more as parasites than as contributing members of the community on which our lives depend. Worst of all, we have created and structured institutions—both corporate and governmental—that separate us from one another, limit our ability for cooperative self-reliance, and increase our dependence on money and the institutions that control it.

It Takes a Village

Our human dependence on one another is evident from the moment we are born. As human beings, we begin life with a body and brain only partially formed and in a state of total dependence. No mother can provide for her own needs and those of an infant by herself. That's why, it's said, "it takes a village to raise a child." But it is not just the child.

For roughly 99 percent of the time since the first humans walked the Earth, our ancestors lived as hunter-gatherer tribes with direct connections to one another and nature. Together, tribal members foraged for nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables. Together, they stalked, killed, and dressed their game. Together, they prepared their food in communal kitchens.

Relationships with one another and nature were direct, lifelong, and grounded in intimate knowledge of one another and the plants and animals they lived among. Tools were simple, self-made, and shared. Critical knowledge and responsibilities were handed down from generation to generation.

The early childhood experience was essential preparation. The human child's path to physical and mental maturity is long and can be treacherous. A newborn in a hunter-gatherer tribe was breast-fed for its first 2-5 years. This provided essential nutrition and constant reassurance of its mother's love and care. He or she experienced constant engagement and enduring relationships with playmates of many ages, the support of an ever-present multi-generational tribal family, and the accessible wisdom of honored elders. The maturing child also led an active outdoor life never separated from nature.

As the child develops, its relationships with people and nature deeply influence its expectations and ways of relating as an adult. In traditional societies, the experience of community not only provided for the child's immediate well-being, it also built a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the whole and for the generations yet to come. This is what the maturing human mind and body evolved to expect and what it continues to require.

In our modern setting, we pride ourselves on our liberation from the need to forage for our food, make our own clothes, and build our own shelter. This can work well to meet the material needs of those with adequate income to buy what they need or want. For most, however, getting the money to meet those material needs is a daily struggle. And no amount of money can buy the love and caring we need to meet our emotional needs.

Statistics on global trends suggest we are creating a world where it is ever harder to meet our emotional, as well as, our material needs. More people are living in [single-person](#) households. In the United States, in 28 percent of households, people live alone. Since the 1960s, the percentage of households with only one person has more than doubled in Australia, Canada, China, Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

Between 1960 and 2016, the percent of children in the United States living in [single-parent households](#) increased from 22 to 31. Often the [single parent](#) is a mom struggling to make ends meet with one or more low-wage jobs that may require long commutes, offer little security, and separate her from her children during most of her waking hours. Far too many children have little or no contact with their mother's or nature and may spend more time with electronic devices than in direct exchange with real people..

Too exhausted to prepare home-cooked meals, we depend on nutritionally deficient, chemically laced packaged meals grown in nutritionally deficient soils laced with toxic chemicals. Online retailers provide for our material needs with no need to venture out of our single-person residence. To fend off our isolation-produced depression, we become addicted to drugs and alcohol.

The mental health consequences of this isolation and the related lack of community support are devastating. U.S. suicides have increased 25 percent since 2000 and experts predict that 50 percent of the current U.S. population will experience a mental health disorder at some point in their lives.

Lessons from Our Ancestors

For all the advances of modern societies, traditional tribal communities may have better served the essential needs of a larger percentage of the then existing human population for emotional support, nutrition, and exercise than does contemporary society for the current human population. Much of what we have celebrated as human progress over the past 100 years involves inserting money, cars, corporations, and government as intermediaries in our relationships with one another and nature. We now face an imperative to restore the direct relationships we have so unwisely disrupted. We don't need to return to the ways of our ancestors, but we do need to apply key lessons of their experience.

Take the case of cities. Instead of building more single-family dwellings, we should build multi-generational, multi-family homes in vibrant eco-villages that share facilities, tools, labor and resources. Instead of designing cities for self-driving, single-person cars, design car free cities designed for walking, biking, and public transportation with many places for people to meet and greet, mix and mingle. Instead of allowing cities to sprawl into suburbs that increase automobile dependence and disrupt ecological integrity, design for compactness and clear delineation of urban-rural boundaries combined with strong urban rural linkages. Working together, cities can work with rural jurisdictions to improve the lives of both rural and urban peoples in ways that restore and enhance the natural regeneration of clean air, clean water and fertile soils, eliminate use of artificial fertilizers and insecticides, and advance the recycling, decomposition and reuse of wastes.

At a global level, instead of growing an economy dependent on global movements of money, people, and goods to maximize profit uncoupled from place, create economies that bring people together to maximize health and well-being in the place where they live. All this must be accomplished in ways that minimize class divisions, maintain human connections with nature, and honor the city's interdependent relationships with surrounding rural areas and peoples.

Such changes will require supportive laws, technologies, and infrastructure. On every dimension, the transition will test the limits of human creativity, social intelligence, and collaboration in the face of ruthless opposition from powerful establishment interests that profit financially from the status quo.

Institutions in Service to Empowered Communities

The institutions of an ecological civilization will support three mutually interdependent outcomes essential a just, peaceful, and sustainable world.

1. **Just (Equitable distribution and sharing of resources).** Achieve a just and equitable distribution and sharing of wealth and power. Immediate action is required to stop the further concentration of wealth while advancing its long-term redistribution, restoring the commons, and connecting the rights of ownership with their corresponding responsibilities.
2. **Peaceful (Nonviolent Resolution of Conflict).** The powerful weaponry of modern warfare produces only losers. The winners are the arms merchants who profit from the suffering and devastation. Armed conflict is an obsolete artifact of

our uncivil past. It represents an unconscionable misuse and devastation of material and human resources that could otherwise be applied to securing the health and well-being of all.

3. **Sustainable World (Earth Health and Balance).** Meet humanity's material needs in ways that restore and ultimately increase the health and productivity of Earth's natural systems. Immediate action is required to eliminate non-essential consumption, recognize the rights of nature, and eliminate technologies harmful to life. Longer term action is required to advance life-serving technologies and create institutional and physical structures that make doing the right thing easy and enjoyable.

These are three distinct, but inseparable outcomes that directly align with the mission of the Parliament of the World's Religions. The success of each depends on the success of all. There will be no sustainability or peace so long as the world is divided between the profligate rich and the desperate poor. Peace and justice are irrelevant if in the face of environmental collapse. Without an end to war we will continue to squander resources on the production and use of the instruments of war without concern for environmental consequences and those without privilege will be conscripted or lured into military service fighting one another.

Community holds the key to all three primary elements of a just, peaceful, and sustainable world. Locally rooted, deeply democratic living communities in which people control their local resources and self-organize to meet their essential needs in synergetic relationships with one another and nature will be the primary units of organization in an ecological civilization.

All institutions must ultimately be accountable to the communities they serve in ways that go far beyond the rituals of electoral politics that give voters a voice in determining which elite faction will control government's command and control institutions until the next election. All corporations must have a public purpose and be accountable for fulfilling it. Transnational corporations must be broken up and restructured to secure local ownership and accountability. This will increase living returns to people and Earth; it will reduce financial returns to billionaires—an inescapable trade off.

The corporations responsible for driving us toward social and environmental collapse will not readily relinquish their power. Leadership will be required from all levels and elements of society.

As with every effort to democratize institutions of authoritarian rule, leadership must come from we the people mobilizing as social movements aligned behind a shared vision of human possibility and a commitment to institutional transformation. This is the vision of an ecological civilization grounded in a love for and commitment to one another and the sacred living Earth that is our home in the cosmos.

Humanity has reached a defining choice point. We can embrace the vision of an ecological civilization aligned with the vision of the of the Parliament of the World's Religions and grounded in the Earth Charter principles to prosper in the pursuit of life. Or we can hold to our present course and perish in the pursuit of money.

This choice is eloquently captured by the Earth Charter's closing words.

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.

The time has come to unite as families, communities, and nations in our common identity as members of Earth's community of life with a shared commitment to create a world of peace, beauty, creativity, material sufficiency, and spiritual abundance for all.

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