

AGENDA 21 AND EARTH CHARTER **STRATEGY IN A NUTSHELL**

The Earth Charter website is at <http://www.earthcharter.org/> . The FAQ section is at <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/FAQ.html#1>.

FROM THE FAQ SECTION:

What is the Earth Charter?

“The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental ethical principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century.”

“Is the Earth Charter primarily concerned about the environment?”

“Although in the Earth Charter there is a special emphasis on the world's environmental challenges, the Charter is centrally concerned with the transition to sustainable ways of living and sustainable human development. The document's inclusive ethical vision recognizes that environmental protection, human rights, equitable human development, and peace are interdependent and indivisible.”

So the answer is no. The environment is not the Earth Charter's primary concern.

FROM THE EARTH CHARTER:

The second to last paragraph of the EC (under the concluding heading, “The Way Forward”) states:

“In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must ...support the implementation of Earth Charter principles with an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.”

The last sentence of the Preamble section says:

“...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.”

FROM THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOK called, “The Earth Charter In Action.”

For the strategy to implement Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter, see the chapter entitled, “The Significance of the Earth Charter in International Law”,

<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/invent/images/uploads/ENG-Bosselmann.pdf>

“In terms of international law principles, the Earth Charter represents prima facie a **draft legal document...**”

“In recent times, soft law has become an important “new” source of international law.... In contrast to “hard law (treaties, custom, general principles), soft law” is not legally binding...”

“...the political strength of Agenda 21, another soft law document, has emerged as a powerful document in international environmental law. Since 1992, Agenda 21 has been recognized and implemented by wide sectors of civil society all around the world. Local governments, small and mid-sized businesses, educational institutions, and professional organizations have enacted statutes or guidelines for sustainable development, citing Agenda 21 as their main source. This new kind of **bottom-up ratification** has put enormous political pressure on governments to **implement some form of governance** for sustainable development. Among all the treaties and international documents promoting sustainable development, none has had as much impact on practice as the soft law Agenda 21.”

“**The target here is to increase endorsements** (in their various forms) up to a point where the Earth Charter reaches a certain **omnipresence**. This process could lead to its **gradual transformation from soft law into a hard law** instrument, in much the same way as nascent principles of law gradually gain recognition and **status as binding ‘customary’ international law.**”

“**The Earth Charter qualifies as a founding document for global law.** as no other international document has described the failure of states and peoples so clearly and forcefully.”