

**EARTH CHARTER UPDATE
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Active interest by SGI members in the Earth Charter movement continues into a fourth year and may even be growing here in the United States and around the world.

The final version of the 16-principle charter was approved by the Earth Charter Commission at a meeting in Paris in March. This provided members with material to continue the campaign of education and awareness as Earth Day 2000 approached on April 22.

The charter sets forth fundamental principles to guide us toward a secure and sustainable level of existence. Although originally conceived out of concern for the destruction of the natural environment, the charter also deals with broader issues such as social and economic justice, the health of women and children, rights of indigenous peoples, democracy, education, nonviolence and peace. In short, the charter attempts to take a broad and balanced view of what is necessary to sustain healthy life on this planet.

Bolstered by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda's support for the Earth Charter process in three successive peace proposals (1997-99), SGI-USA members had sponsored more than 35 meetings, involving nearly 2,000 participants, up until this year. Many were inspired by the opportunity to provide input on the language of the charter to the international drafting committee. During the same period, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century sponsored Earth Charter- and ecology-related seminars, as well as publishing three books on the subject. SGI-USA also has a representative on the Earth Charter USA National Network, the coordinating group for the United States.

Armed with the finalized version, some members took the opportunity to kick off another round of education by using the Earth Charter at their discussion meetings in April and beyond. Although reports are still coming in, it is known that meetings were held in Florida, Oregon, Minnesota, California and Iowa.

At the same time, three SGI-USA members (see photo, below left) were attending the Earth Charter USA 2nd Annual National Conference, April 20-22, in Alexandria, Va. There at least two reports were made about our members' efforts.

A recently released international Earth Charter status report further recognizes the activities of SGI members in their communities in Uruguay, Holland, South Korea, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

The final paragraph of the charter perhaps best sums up the goal of the above-mentioned efforts to pursue dialogue: "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."

To read the entire charter and background information, go to www.sgi-usa.org; www.earthcharter.org or www.earthcharterusa.org; or contact Al Albergate at (310) 260-8958.