

Date : 1 November, 2010
Time : 14:10 to 16.30 Hrs
Workshop : 1
Title : Religions, Spirituality and Ethics
Session : 1
Coordinators: Kiran Chhokar
Moderators : Rick Clugston, Michael Slaby
Rapporteurs : Ashotosh Dwivedi and Karin Schaettle



Session 1: Overview - The Earth Charter and Religion, Spirituality and Ethics

Chair : Michael Slaby

The workshop started with the welcome note given by Michael Slaby. During his speech he said that the workshop is a very good platform for sharing the experience of all the participants of different religion and it is going to be an extensive workshop. During his opening remark he is also talking about drafting process of the Earth Charter and inclusion of Religion and spirituality in this draft earth charter. He is also emphasized on the religious and spiritual element of nature as well.

Speaker : Mary Evelyn Tucker, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University

After the opening remark, Mary Evelyn has facilitated the workshop further. She said that before going ahead it might be a good idea to look about the religion related principals written in draft

Earth Charter. Besides this she also talked about the background that how religion aspect comes into the earth charter principles. In her speech she is talked about:

- Ritual practices which emphasize the spiritual value of nature itself which can be found in all religions of the world.
- Religion and Spirituality values acknowledged in the Earth Charter, which help to renew the human-earth relationship.
- The conservation values from different religions brought into the earth charter:
 - a. **Hinduism:** Unity of all life, principals of non-violence.
 - b. **Jainism:** Principal of Ahimsa is there.
 - c. **Confucianism:** Principal of circles of life, family, nature, cosmos and resonance in relationship between humanity and universe.
 - d. **Indigenous tradition:** Includes sense of interdependency of all life. She is also talked about the cultural value of Indigenous tradition.

Speaker : Steven Rockefeller

He agreed with Mary and emphasized on contribution done by the Forum of Religion and Ecology in drafting process of the Earth Charter Principals. In his speech he talks about:

- Several hundred theologians, experts, leaders and organizations of different religious and spiritual traditions have contributed to the drafting of the Earth Charter.
- He shared the process of facilitating the consultation among various religious and spiritual traditions..
- He talked about several controversial issues that came up in this consultation process, such as the “intrinsic value of all beings” vs. the Buddhist concept of no self, the use of the words God/creator and creature, and vegetarianism and treating all beings with compassion.
- God and creator was replaced by the use of the more inclusive term “reverence towards the mystery of being,” to make it more acceptable to atheists and scientists in addition to religious and spiritual people.

Speaker : Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, Jacob Soetendorp Institute for Human Values

He started with a passionate plea for increased interfaith and intergenerational collaboration in Earth history. He also said that every single person is touched somehow by spirituality.

Further he has said a beautiful remark “*We have to lift our eyes.*” i.e. we have to see also the things beyond the things which we were taught. For example seeing water in the rock, gardens in a desert. In the same way we also have to see the visions of the future in the present. He continues claiming that the interaction should not be blocked; it has to have the flow; like water or blood.

He said that here in this conference all the people attend different workshops, but there was need for greater interaction. People should be going from one workshop to another. In his closing remark he talks about the youth and said that here I have seen many youth participant in this workshop and also said that he feels ashamed because he can't give them the peaceful world he would like to give.

He emphasized that that is why the generations have to work together now. The young people as guiders and the grown-ups have to look at them with a sense of responsibility- as if they would look in the eye of a newborn child. In his closing remark he said that *"May God give us the strength to do what needs to be done."*

Speaker : Rick Clugston

He spoke about "The Earth Charter Task Force on Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics". The task force has been using different resource materials and the task of this workshop is to expand the existing tasks force and decide on a common plan of action.

- How the earth charter can be used in different sectors and how religion and the different sectors can work together to get the EC recognized at Rio +20.

Speaker : Chang Ji Fa Shi, Dharma Drum Mountain

At the end of the workshop Chang Ji Fa Shi from the Dharma Drum Mountain Organization based in Taiwan and America shares her project experiences with the other participants of the workshop. .

She mentioned that it is necessary to teach and protect, first the spiritual environment which focuses on the inner environment, second the social environment, third the living environment which is about interaction among people and lastly the relationship with nature.

During the workshop she asked a question to the distinguish participants i.e. *"Where do we have to start when we want to change the nature"*? She answered that we have to begin with the thoughts. Furthermore she asks the audience: *"Where does the past and the future exist?"* And she replied only in our minds. In the workshop, she continues to talk about retreats they have organized with youth in America. She also shared some tools and methodologies that they use in these retreats such as an the Story of Stuff, the Age of Stupid, a utensil pouch they give to the youth so that they don't use disposable plastic forks and spoons, and a NO Spending Week which helped to reflect on needs and what is really valuable.