

# *D r a f t*

*(May 2001)*

*Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World*  
*Intercultural and linguistic group*

## *CHARTER OF THE ALLIANCE*

*An intercultural and multilingual contribution*  
*to the framing of a Charter of the Alliance*

Syros Workshop, Greece  
30<sup>th</sup> october - 4<sup>th</sup> november 2000

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## ***Introduction***

### **BACKGROUND**

#### ***From Naxos to Syros***

In October 1998, the translators of the initial declaration of the Alliance, titled the "Platform", and a number of resource persons were invited to come together on the island of Naxos in Greece. The purpose was to let them share their difficulties with the cultural interpretation of that text which they encountered when translating it into some twenty -mainly non-Western- languages. Through an in-depth study of the underlying implicit meaning of words, the participants exposed questionable cultural presuppositions which were prevalent in the Platform, as in many international or so-called 'universal' texts.

The difficulties encountered proved to be not only problems of translation, but -more fundamentally- differences in views on the relations between human beings, and between the human being and society, nature and the cosmos.

Consequently, the question came up *to what extent a founding text of an international movement would be able to mobilise people from various different cultural and historical contexts if such a text is conceived in one or two international (dominant) languages, i.e. western languages.*

The results of the Naxos workshop have been published in a book “ *What words do not say* ” (E. Sizoo, 1999, Paris : Editions Charles Léopold Mayer).

The main recommendation that came out of this process was that the time has come to go beyond the classical ways of writing single texts for international use. There was a clear desire to open up this type of texts to other world views, including different expressions of spiritual wisdom and practices. Therefore, the usual procedure had to be turned on its head : instead of translating a 'ready-made' text couched in one of the dominant international languages, the more realistic option would be to start by writing a series of context-sensitive texts in local languages crafted in consultation with local groups.

These 'contextualised' texts would bring out what is felt to be especially relevant to specific contexts, highlighting the concerns and aspirations of people exposed to them, and the values underlying their ways of life.

A subsequent collective effort to compare the contents of the 'local' texts would bring out similarities and differences. This analysis would unveil to what extent common guiding principles can be formulated. These principles could then form the common ground for a founding text which would be transmitted in a whole range of languages. These plurilingual versions using culturally different ways of linguistic expression would strike a chord in the hearts and minds of the people concerned.

The underlying idea of this recommendation was to first go through a phase of making cultural diversities explicit and subsequently find out what one has in common, what this eventual communality consists of and at which level it is situated.

*A charter for a responsible, plural and united world*

In February 2000, a first proposal for a Charter of the Alliance was published. Its purpose was to respond to the need for a "third pillar of international life" setting out "the rights and responsibilities of humankind in the face of the challenges of the 21st century". This proposal resulted from a first phase (1994-1998) of consultations in the various continents, conducted by Andre Levesque. The proposed text was conceived and drawn up in the French language.

Given the cultural difficulties brought to the fore by the Naxos Group, it was proposed to compose an intercultural group which, on the one hand, would submit the proposed draft Charter of the Alliance to an intercultural and multi-lingual 'test', and on the other hand take up the challenge of the recommendation of the Naxos Group.

In the framework of its programme "*Living in peace in a world of diversity*", the Fondation Charles Léopold Mayer (FPH) generously supported this new endeavour, which was led by Network Cultures, based in Brussels.

***PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS***

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## Chapter 1

### THE PROCESS

#### 1.1. The participants

The number of participants taking part in the process was 23. As some of them grew up with more than one mother tongue, they covered together 25 languages : 10 African languages, 7 Asian languages, 2 Arab languages, 2 Latin-American languages and 4 European languages.

#### 1.2. Purpose and working method

##### Preparation

The Workshop in Syros was preceded by two rounds of written contributions from each participant. This preparation increased the efficiency of the work during the Workshop itself, because everyone had seriously reflected on the various concerns in her/his own context and the means of facing these in culturally relevant ways. And, in consultation with people and groups in their own country, they had already compared local concerns with the five principles proposed in the draft Charter of the Alliance (February 2000). Moreover, reading what other participants had to say about the same issues and questions had allowed them to enter into dialogue before the workshop itself.

In this way, as soon as they arrived at the island of Syros in Greece, they could immediately "dive" into the *proper objective of the workshop* : contributing to the Alliance's process of elaborating a Charter which *in its content* reflects the *communality* of convictions for constructing an enduring world and *in its form* the cultural *diversity* of different ways of linguistic expression.

##### The workshop

During the Workshop itself, the participants dealt every day with one single question:

- 1<sup>st</sup> day :           - In my context, which relevant *guiding principles* are capable of mobilising people and groups ?  
                          ?
- To what extent do we have guiding principles in common ?
- 2<sup>nd</sup> day : - *Comparison* between our guiding principles and the five principles  
                          of the proposed draft Charter of the Alliance (February 2000). To what extent are the latter  
                          appropriate and applicable?

This comparison resulted in a tentative identification of common guiding principles for personal action and collective transformation.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> day : - Following the results of the first two days, each participant made a first attempt to draw up *a draft text in her/his own language* in order to 'test' whether the ideas and guiding principles that came out so far were "culturally translatable", that is : were sufficiently relevant in the various contexts.
- 4<sup>th</sup> day : - Sharing the experiences of this drafting exercise led to important changes in the guiding principles which had been selected at the end of the second day.
- 5<sup>th</sup> day : - Final discussion and consensus on six guiding principles and their meaning which were considered relevant for all contexts (see Annex). They can be transmitted in the 25 languages covered by the participants of the Syros group. Of course, they will not be literally translated, but presented in culturally adequate ways.
- A *key criterion* in the selection of these principles was *their operational and mobilising capacity* : they have to bring to mind, right from the start, ways and means to put them into practice and to mobilise people to engage into action. This was the reason why also means are suggested inside the text which comments on each proposed principle.

#### *A Charter like a tree*

The six guiding principles are proposed as a possible common ground, a *content*, which can be 'transposed' into different languages in culturally adequate *forms*. To make the idea clear, the following image was used : this common ground would be the roots of a tree, like a Banyan Tree or a banana tree, which produces a number of trunks in different languages which contain the application of the proposed guiding principles in a culturally adapted way.

#### ***The report***

The results of the preparatory process and the workshop itself are laid down in the following chapters. Chapter 2 deals with the reactions of the participants to "The Alliance and its Charter". Chapter 3 "Divergences and convergence" highlights considerations of the participants inspired by their specific contexts. The reader will find in the Annex the six principles chosen by the Syros Group.

#### ***And finally...***

The participants of the Syros group are perfectly aware of the fact that their contribution is ***only one*** among the many contributions emanating from the various 'colleges', thematic workshops and continental groups in the Alliance.

Their proposal to form a drafting committee for a final proposal for a Charter of the Alliance has been taken up by the co-ordinator of the Assembly 2001 of the Alliance in Lille, Pierre Calame. This committee will make an in-depth analysis of all the comments and all the proposals of the various groups within the Alliance in order to formulate a text which takes into account all the headwork done by the allies. This final proposal will be submitted to the General Assembly of the Alliance in December 2001.

<b>Some comments of the participants on the methodology</b>
<p><i>"The questions put to the participants in the two waves of preparatory contributions made it possible to provide all participants with a clear sense of direction. From the first contribution onwards they made it possible to focus on essential issues which were a concern to all and which had to be integrated in the principles of the Charter. The contributions of the second wave have enriched and clarified ideas. For another workshop one could choose another country in order to see whether other local spirits allow us to achieve our objectives more easily. We would be happy to receive you in Africa." (Théophile Amouzou)</i></p>
<p><i>"There was a problem of determining whether a certain concept was a principle or not, e.g. "peace", "justice", "responsibility". I feel it is important to reach agreement on the meaning of the term "principle"." (Gerald Wanjohi)</i></p>
<p><i>"For me the process of exchange of ideas related to the propositions for a draft of a Charter has been the most interesting part of the workshop. The work in linguistic groups for the purpose of finding out whether principles found were translatable and culturally acceptable has contributed to a better understanding of the particular difficulties a Charter encounters when situated in the socio-cultural contexts represented by the members of the group." (Luis Carlos Arboleda)</i></p>
<p><i>"Male dominance amongst participants is not amenable to best results." (Sureshwar)</i></p> <p><i>"The preparatory phase of the workshop was excellent but not frequent enough. I suggest in future we have an electronic forum in addition to the two waves of written contributions. This way people can respond to one another and exchange views more intensely before the workshop." (Chan)</i></p>
<p><i>"It was a well planned process that through the first wave of contributions allowed us at a general and socio-cultural level to become much more conscious of our differences. The methodology of the meeting was very flexible and adjusting itself to the rhythm of the day, without constraints, as a result of which it was possible to produce a document with concrete ideas and depth, which in the area of participants' emotions and ways of reasoning represents our diversity. The occasion allowed for much interaction between persons, with space for dialogue, working in groups and plenary sessions." (Eulalia Flor)</i></p>
<p><i>"I find the methodology used very well conceived. Each time people talk about the preparation of a meeting I present it as an example. Moreover, it has inspired me to draw up a methodology of that sort for a forum discussion in connection with our workshop "Education for the Environment". (Yolanda Ziaka)</i></p>

*"Concerning the infrastructure and the logistics: a good organization of the whole workshop. A very pleasant environment. We have not noticed any halt in the warm welcome extended to us or any hitch in the arrangement for transport, the reservations, confirmations, the lodging in the hotels, the repayment of costs incurred. The tourist circuit was well chosen and allowed us to become aware of the economic transformation at work on this island Syros. A word of thanks to Yolanda and Vasilis as well as Nicole!" (Théophile Amouzou)*

**Some suggestions of the participants with respect to the follow-up**

*"A general worldview from the perspective of the Alliance is necessary for involving people. It should not be something like a declaration of opinions, but rather worded in a more convincing form. Considering the subjects and goals of a Charter we may need to consult more people from more cultural backgrounds (such as the Japanese, the Russians), people who have a professional knowledge of law. When other language versions are made, we should translate those versions into English and French so that the hidden differences can become manifest." (Zhao Yi feng).*

*"The follow-up is perhaps the most important part of this workshop. Each participant must relate the draft of the Charter to her/his own context, organize local meetings to verify whether it can be accepted as valuable and be made applicable." (Aurélien Atidegla)*

*"It is necessary to continue the exchanges of ideas with respect to the content of the principles retained by the workshop. Those exchanges would serve the purpose of deepening an understanding of all their nuances and all the relations among them and between them and other principles. Since the text is open to other exercises of socio-cultural transposition, such exchanges will preserve unity in the heart of the Charter (a question of avoiding a flight into eclecticism seemingly justified by the need for specificity in the transposition)." (Luis Arboleda)*

*"It is very important to enrich the work on the Charter with files documenting experiences which illustrate the principles retained. For example, in order to illustrate how they operate one could put in the final text the description of some principles (for example "solidarity") plus one or two stories recounting concrete experiences with solidarity in Africa or elsewhere. Each participant could compose a file for the principle (s)he considers the most important in her/his context (cultural or professional). In that way the final text will be richer and more appealing to an outside reader." (Yolanda Ziaka)*

## *Chapter 2.*

### *THE ALLIANCE AND ITS CHARTER*

#### *2.1. The movement and its name*

##### *2.1.1. "Responsibility", "plurality", "solidarity" and "unity"*

To name a movement, to give its basic text a title, is an act of great importance: it is a symbolic act that endows it with meaning. The name one attaches to a movement carries the significance and orientation one wants to give to it. It allows its members not only to distinguish themselves from others, but also -and equally important- to identify with each other.

A movement that wants to be *international*, and can, therefore, not be but *intercultural*, needs to take into account the relevance of the signifiers chosen as well as their cultural interpretation in different geographical, social and political contexts.

It is for those reasons that the participants of the Syros group have verified which meaning is attributed in their own cultural and linguistic contexts to the notions which appear in the name of the Alliance and the name proposed for its Charter. How do the concepts "responsibility", "plurality", "solidarity" and "unity" echo when translated in African, Asian and Latin-American languages? Was it a good idea to translate the French word "*solidair*" into "united"? The adjectives chosen do they correspond with the deep-seated aspirations of the people everywhere on the planet? Do they trigger off a feeling of being obliged to bring about transformations in the years to come? In short, are they mobilizing .....everywhere?

After a good many discussions the Syros group has asked itself why, in fact, these ethical principles were chosen and not other ones? And what is more: is it really desirable to refer to a movement by ethical principles? Rather than preaching morality, would it not be better to find a title that would immediately call to mind the main objectives of the Alliance, its dream, its utopian view? Would it be possible to choose a name which does not raise questions like the one chosen by the Earth Council: Earth Charter. If the Alliance is incited by an awareness that humanity runs the risk of destroying the earth and, consequently, itself, does it not essentially fight for Life, for the entitlement to Life, a durable life of the Earth, together with a dignified life for all human beings?

##### *2.1.2. Cultural and linguistic sense and nonsense*

Reactions from different countries show that anyone of the ethical principles chosen by the Alliance in order to distinguish itself through its name is, in certain instances - culturally speaking - self-evident, and in other ones not making much sense. In both instances they are not particularly mobilizing. Moreover, ethical

principles which do appeal to the consciousness of people are not everywhere the same; or, what also happens, they are acknowledged by words, but differently appreciated. Here are some examples:

*Brazil (Hamilton Faria et Valmir de Souza) :*

- "The three adjectives *"responsible"*, *"plural"*, and *"united"* added to "a world" *do not seem to make sense* in Brazil, because we are going through a crisis of ethical values. Therefore, these notions are "charged" with emptiness. *Respect is more relevant* in our context, because people want to be respected, taken into account.
- Responsibility does not mean much in Brazil. During the period of dictatorship the elites have misused the term too much;
- Plurality, yes, if conceived as diversity;
- Solidarity is too strong a term;
- Unity is not a concept that is much used. It needs an explanation or still better: to be taken out.

Of the three notions *only diversity resonates in Brazil.*"

*India (Makarand Paparanje and Sureshwar Sinha)*

- *"Responsibility and pluralism*, though important in the Indian context, *don't* have very popular or widely circulated words to correspond to them. In Hindi, for instance, *uttardaitva*, a word derived from Sanskrit, goes for responsibility. It is seldom used. The word *zimmedari*, from Urdu, is more common. *Zimmedari* is a very good word, but the people haven't got the idea that they ought to be more responsible. The political culture, too, emphasises rights more than responsibilities.
- Similarly, *pluralism doesn't have a popular Indian equivalent*, though the idea in the sense of *tolerance, co-existence, and multiculturalism*, is very common. Whereas *tolerance*, an important value in Asia, covers responsibility and plurality, the nuances are different.
- The word that does *resonate instantly* is *unity, ekta*. It is used very commonly. Most people in India would relate to it, but *not so easily outside the context of the nation-state*.
- Is the term *Unity* at world level achievable? Has not the United Nations shown how disunited it can be? Could we not emphasise the brotherhood of humankind in 'collectives' of varied cultures, leaving the United Nations to struggle with the 'unity' concept? Unity in the world wide context, could, at best, be an ethical or moral principle referring to the brotherhood of humankind."

*Bangladesh (Jarlath D'Souza):*

- *"Responsibility: Am I really responsible for the mess the world is now in? Or, for the abjection and poverty of the masses in quite a few countries? Or, for the alarming surge of violence the world over? Or for the misuse of "fundamentalism" in religion, practice and theory? The Bangladeshi man or woman on the street will tend to say : No, I didn't do it; I'm not responsible. Look at those at the helm of affairs, the government, the leaders of society. It is because of them; not because of us, the ordinary public.*  
Nevertheless, the attitudes are changing. The NGO movement and civil society in general are helping to reorient the minds of the oppressed people, to "conscientize" the people (using Paolo Freire's terminology). The sense of responsibility is now emerging. "Dayitto" is the Bangla term for this. More and more people are concerned about society, about the happiness of others, about the future of the planet.

- *Plurality* is a concept that *does not need to be stressed* in the Bangladesh context. The cultural "cauldron" is just one, just Bangladeshi, so rich with its many strands: religion-wise Muslim, Hindus and Buddhists going basically towards one and the same goal; plus, the inter-mingling with the cultures of at least a dozen tribal ethnic groups. But the language is one: Bangla and the cultural norms are from the same pre-Aryan and largely Dravidian and Australoid peoples' behavior and mind-sets.
- So, there *is Plurality* -but plurality coming from roots deep down, almost *to the point of becoming a Unity*. In fact, Bangladesh is a rare example of a large fairly mono-ethnic State, mono-ethno-cultural rather than ethnic, of a people united through the strong bonds of a rich common language, Bangla. This language itself came from a mingling of the original Sanskritic tongue with a number of "Prakrits" or colloquial languages. Bangladesh, is also a rare example of people and a country that achieved political independence on the basis of a single language and culture, Bangla. So, the concept of being united has a historical base and is a life-giving force for the future.
- However, as the February 2000 document on the proposed Charter of the Alliance points out (page 4), the proposed Charter of the Alliance will need to focus also on what is termed 'citizenship'. I presume, *citizenship of the world*. The great poet of Bangladesh, Rabindranath Tagore was probably one of the first persons in modern times to proclaim the common man to be a citizen of the whole world, not just of his own country; for instance, in Song 31 of "Gitanjali" he sings, "Give me a little bit of room in your world assembly!" The Bauls (itinerant mystic singers) of Bangladesh have also been speaking of this world citizenship, in relation to a single non-sectarian Creator Deity. To them the "world" means both the hereafter world and the humdrum daily existential world full of sorrows and illusions. So for Bangladeshi, the dimensions of Citizenship are almost cosmic."

*Malaysia (Chan Ngai Weng):*

- "Yes these concepts respond to our peoples' aspirations, but more important and in any case indispensable are *Harmony and Tolerance*."

*Benin (Aurélien Atidegla):*

- "Yes these notions correspond with our aspirations, but other ones are also pertinent."

*Togo (Théophile Amouzou):*

- "These notions form a part of our tradition to show solidarity and to respect people who are different from us. But those who had been received as friends proved to be cunning people, who slowly reduced our people to a state of slavery, transformed our countries into colonies, exploited and plundered our riches, imposed their cultures and religions.... Africans long to rediscover themselves. That is where their priority lies."

*Kenya (Gerald Wanjohi):*

- "In Gikuyu society *responsibility* means *faithfulness* in discharging one's duty in a community;
- *Plurality* is essential in Kenya as there are 42 different ethnic groups none of which is able to rule the country."

*Greece (Vanda Chalyvoulou et Nicholas Anastassopoulos) :*

- *Plurality* : Greece, throughout its history, went through several phases characterised by pluralist thinking. Various ethnic groups lived in Greece and Greeks were always in touch with many different cultures. At this point in time (though there are still memories of this coexistence) with the pressure coming from waves of immigrants in recent years and also as a result of technological developments in a globalized culture that introduce contact with people everywhere, Greeks become re-educated in new terms in concepts of pluralism in a new global society.
- *Unity* : On some occasions specific events manage to stir feelings of unity in Greek people, from celebrations for victorious sports games to unanimous protests against war. This is expressed as a spontaneous massive reaction.
- *Responsibility* : Greek society is going through a transitional period at the moment. There are such notions as responsibility being emphasized at this time, while this is by no means an indication that we have reached the appropriate levels of responsibility needed as society or individuals.
- *Freedom, Democracy and Peace* are prerequisites for the notion of "united". Responsibility and plurality are prerequisites for freedom and democracy, though plurality functions only in a situation of democracy and peace."

*United States (Larry Thompson) :*

- *Responsibility* : my society has a very strong sense of the *individual being responsible* for his actions. We do *not* generally believe that a *society, community, or family* is *legally responsible* for the actions of its members, although they may bear a moral responsibility.
- The concept of *plurality* -most often expressed in the U.S. as "*majority rule*"- is a fundamental principle for governing the internal affairs of my country. However, the concept of *plurality for international issues* is *not widely accepted*. I doubt that the U.S. will agree, in the foreseeable future, on plurality as the dominant principle for international governance. A mixed system of governance -such as the checks and balances in the U.S. system, the UN, or the EU- would be more feasible.
- *United* has a limited meaning in U.S. English. The "*United*" States are united and indivisible and its member states have *no right to secede from the union*. However, this acceptance of the concept of "united" has also some qualifiers. Individual states have rights and privileges on which the federal government cannot encroach. Thus, the "United" States are not united in all things. In international affairs, "allies" and "friends" are words more often used than "united" to express a close association with another country or people.
- While these three concepts are valid in the context of U.S. culture, I believe that the *U.S. citizen would be highly suspicious* of the use of these words in an *international context without first defining their meaning and placing limits on their applicability*.
- The U.S. would be more likely to accept the document *if the basic rights and responsibilities for the individual, the community, the nation state, and the global community were clearly set out*. Thus, knowing the rights guaranteed to him or her as an individual and as a citizen of the U.S., concepts related to a charter for all humankind could then be more easily considered."

*Algeria/France (Djamila Tella)*

- "These notions are important, but one could also think of tolerance, for example religious freedom."

## ***2.2.. The proposed Charter of February 2000***

### ***2.2.1. History and outcome***

#### ***Developments***

The process of framing a Charter is characterised by an iterative process based on the *double necessity* of *unity and diversity* : to lay a common foundation for action while respecting the diversity of cultural, linguistic, economic, political and ecological contexts. This required a reciprocating scheme allowing progressively for elements of convergence.

Until now, the following cycles were accomplished :

1990-1993:

- intercultural dialogues resulting in the framing of the *Platform for a Responsible and United world* : statement of seven common values.

1995-1998 :

- workshops ("the human forums") led by André Levesque and his team in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. Starting from daily realities experienced in a variety of societies, these workshops were aiming at detecting common values and principles. Result : a first proposal for a Charter which was finalised in February 2000. (Initially this Charter was called "Earth Charter", but to avoid confusion with the Earth Charter of the Earth Council, it was decided to name the Alliance's Charter : *Charter for a Responsible, Plural and United World.*)

1999-end of 2000 :

- a period of testing the fecundity of the draft Charter at two levels :
  - does the text incite wide adhesion in terms of its content, its form and its language ?
  - can the text be worked out in concrete terms for socio-professional groups, various fields of human action and geo-cultural contexts ? Work realised in this framework :
    - application of the principles of the draft Charter in "codes of conduct" for higher education, scientific activity, public authorities
    - application to global governance, water management, etc.
    - testing the cultural relevance of the content, form and language in various linguistic regions (Syros group).

## **Ambition**

In the presentation of the proposed Charter of February 2000 ("*Towards formulating the rights and responsibilities of humankind in the face of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*"), the ambition of an Alliance's Charter was expressed as follows :

*" International life is at present underpinned by two pillars: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, centred on the dignity of individuals and their rights, and the Charter of the United Nations which focuses on peace and development. Over the last half-century, bloody strife has been rampant, and international relations have been buffeted by successive crises. Through it all, these two pillars have been a framework and enabler of undeniable progress in the organisation of international relations. But these last fifty years have seen radical changes wrought to the world itself. Humankind now confronts new challenges. (...). It is clear that the two-pillar framework can no longer get to grip with managing current and future changes.(...)*

*The Earth Charter worked out by the Alliance must have four key features, which are its "specifications":*

*- The Charter must address the main challenges to humankind in the next century. It must not be a document of the moment, specific to a particular field of human activity, like the environment, for example. The Charter must be a framework for getting to grips with the threefold crisis : crisis in relations and interaction : among societies, among people, and between people and their environment. The Platform also points out how the powerful tools humankind has developed -science and technology, the market- tend to impose their own laws. The Charter must offer a solid foundation for wresting back control.*

*- The Charter must be a basis on which to gradually build a new legal, political, institutional, social system, creating new rules for our societies. It must enshrine general principles which can gradually be applied in specifics to a range of stakeholders -people, governments, companies, etc.- and spheres of human activity.*

*- The Charter is a Charter of humankind's rights and responsibilities vis-a-vis the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

*- The Earth Charter must enshrine universal principles. Is universal applicability possible in practice? Is it theoretically conceivable? The question cannot be ducked. (...), but we find that we are today faced with a practical imperative.(...). If we are not to be doomed, we must agree on a set of principles for managing together the only planet we have."*

## **Structure and content**

The authors of the draft for the Proposed Charter (André Levesque, his team, and Pierre Calame) explain that while working on it they gradually came to

*"structure the proposed Charter around five major relations, linking together correlatives: unity and diversity, myself and others, freedom and responsibility, being and having, moving and unmoving. What this structure boils down to is that universal principles are to be looked for more in ways of tackling problems than in the solutions offered to the problems themselves. That resulted in a form of words very different to that of most other draft Charters, which centre around a declaration of practical challenges - saving the planet, social justice, human development, gender relations, democracy, etc. - and goals to be attained.*

*This structure is the point at which strands of thought along different lines converge :*

*The first line of thought addresses substantive ethical issues. In practical terms, they pose awkward questions: the need to balance seemingly conflicting requirements, which also involves choices - what gets priority? - and creative imagination - what is the best way to balance them?*

*The second addresses changing value systems. Humankind faces radically new situations which demand creativity, inventiveness and new ways of feeling, thinking and behaving. But you do not change a value system just like that. A new system of ethics comes about more from a reinterpretation of a basic core of values deeply-rooted in different civilizations, applied to new situations. This is what is expressed by the linkage of correlatives: the relation between unity and diversity is set in new terms with the challenge of saving the planet; the relation between freedom and responsibility is set in new terms with scientific advance, etc.*

*The third line of thought addresses the nature of the crises facing the modern world. We said in the Platform that they were crises of relations between people, societies, humankind and its environment. That also prompted us to consider the ethical precepts themselves in terms of relations." (In : ("Towards formulating the rights and responsibilities of humankind in the face of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century")*

1. *To preserve humankind in its wealth and the planet in its integrity, diversity and unity must be conciliated at every level.*
2. *Recognition of others is the foundation of all relationships and all peace.*
3. *Acceptance of the constraints entailed by the preservation of the common good is indispensable to the exercise of freedom.*
4. *Material development is at the service of human development.*
5. *Innovation is not an aim in itself, it is a means to serve human development and the safekeeping of the planet.*

### 2.2.2. Critical comments

#### *Legitimization of a Charter issued by the Alliance*

*"Are we in the process of producing a Charter too much?"*

(participant)

The main question the participants of the Syros group asked themselves with respect to a Charter issued by the Alliance was the one about its *legitimization*, i.e. would the Alliance have the authority and the necessary means to get such a Charter accepted by that *"set of actors, persons, states, enterprises and those active in other fields of human endeavour (sciences and technology, education, agriculture, etc.)"*. And more importantly: how to guarantee the effective implementation of such a Charter?

Reactions coming from a Chinese and an American participant illustrate quite different views on the legitimization of a Charter. The former suggests that a Charter will not be effective unless it will have been ratified by official authorities. The latter advocates a moral document that does not pretend to be more than an appeal, stating universal and durable truths.

ZHAO Yi feng:

1. *"Does a charter of the Alliance challenge national sovereignty ?* For example, how to use water and land resources is a matter of internal affairs of a nation state or a matter of international affairs. When a State breaks, or considers to break, the terms of the charter, would that give some world powers excuses to conduct political or even military intervention ? The point is: whatever may cause concern of their sovereignty, will cause problem to the Chinese.
2. In practice, *who are the legitimate bodies to sign the charter of the Alliance and how to enforce it ?* Suppose there are 10 million people from China who signed the charter but the government does not sign it, would China be considered as a body committed to this charter? When a violation occurs, who and how to check it, by NGOs, or international organisations? We know that the UN is an organisation of nations. If we go through the UN as the body to oversee the practice of the charter, then practically, only governments have the right, power, or qualification to sign the charter. If individuals and NGOs are legitimate bodies to sign the charter, then the charter will be a document of, largely, moral or religious nature. By this I mean some clarification may be needed to the general public of China.
3. What will be the implication of this charter for people involved in different historical processes ? *The Chinese have been very much "modernisation" oriented during the past several decades and they view that as a condition of the recent fast development of China. It will take a while before they cool down from that mentality. Taken this background, people may say: Well, the principles of the Charter are fine, but why can't we do what the West has done in the past? Would these principles slow down our development and restrict us in the position as a less developed country forever? Look at the World Cultural Summit in Versailles (June 2000) where some people were celebrating the material benefits of the new technology and economic globalisation while other people are concerned about the problems*

the same process is causing. The general public in China is largely compatible to the first group. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to get the Chinese transcend the current materialistic development, and it takes time. By this I mean, the Chinese are historically in a transitional time and to make the charter fully understandable to them, some other work needs to be done.

4. I am concerned about the title. The title "*Earth Charter*" used by the Earth Council well identifies its goal of being the third pillar, since it addresses "*earth*" as the key subject and focuses on the relationship of man with the earth. The Alliance's title "*Charter for a Responsible, Plural and United World*" sounds much more like a manifesto of governance, which somehow shifted the core concept of the charter. Besides, a shorter title is usually more attractive than a longer one. At least, the Chinese translation of the long title would sound a little awkward and having a religious or political meaning."

Larry Thompson :

1. "First, I would be concerned if the Charter envisioned a rigid world structure, bureaucracy, or government. I don't think it is possible to see into the future to determine how the world might be organised over the next century. The Charter should state general principles, but should not attempt to prescribe in detail how we will achieve those principles.
2. Secondly, I would be concerned if the Charter emphasised the predominance of community or collective rights at the expense of individual rights. Obviously, in a world of six billion persons, we have to find ways to live together, but the equality of all persons and the basic freedoms of the individual to life, freedom of speech, and freedom of association should be acknowledged and preserved. We also need to find a way of expressing the right of smaller communities, including families, to coexist with larger and more powerful communities.
3. Thirdly, I believe that we want to find universal truths to which we can all agree. We should avoid the mentioning of current or popular issues, which can be quickly overtaken by events and become quaint and outdated. We want to produce a document that people one hundred years from now will read and find of continuing relevance and importance."

### ***The formulation of the five principles***

#### *General problems*

1. Conceiving in terms of relations is fruitful. However, as the latter are presented as *dual* relations, they do not easily link up with non-western cultural and religious world-views which are by nature more holistic, i.e. which consider everything being related to everything.
2. If the 5 principles do not immediately call to mind the most urgent and concrete problems which the majority of human beings on earth experience, then they risk to be of little value as *factors stirring people to action*.
3. The fundamental problem of "power" in relations between human beings, between citizens and their government, between states, is not sufficiently brought up.

4. The phrasing of the five principles in the proposition for a Charter of February 2000 and the comments do not provide a clear idea about how to make them *operational*.  
The 5 principles are formulated in sentences which require rereading several times over in order to understand the sense and implications. It would be preferable to restrict oneself to simple notions which provoke a whole series of positive connotations and to link these to each other. In fact, if one agrees on the *content* of the notions retained, one can "transpose" them in different languages in *forms* which are culturally adequate.
5. As far as problems of translation are concerned, it has been observed that there are not always equivalent notions in non-western languages and vice-versa. Moreover, the approach adopted by the authors of the text is homocentric (it is the human being that manages the future and the planet) which is not everywhere understood or accepted. Hence the pertinence of a multicultural Charter, not "translated", but transposed in other languages and adapted to different cultural and linguistic contexts.
6. The Syros group prefers a *short title* for the Charter of the Alliance. The currently proposed title "*Charter for a responsible, plural and united world*" refers to as many as three moral principles (or even four since in the translation from French into English "solidaire" is replaced by "united", a totally different notion).  
The use of so many moral principles in a title is anyway ill-advised. It raises already at the beginning (unnecessarily) a controversial issue: why those principles and not other ones?

*Specific problems.*

1st, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3rd principle:

- "The principles 1, 2 and 3 of the Charter correspond to a great extent with the main principles in my society, but would be differently expressed, notably by proverbs; their application in daily life is found in the principles guiding our social life. Inter-tribal marriages show the acceptance and the recognition of the other as an integral part of the evolution of the human species. The 3 principles are found back in our conception of respect for *diversity and solidarity*. But one could say that these are *cross-sectional principles* which follow from the conception of the world and the human being. That conception has its roots in spirituality (of which no mention is made in this proposal)." (Dieudonné N'koum, Cameroon; Théophile Amouzou, Togo; Aurélien Atidegla, Benin)

## 3rd principle :

- "I would like to turn this principle on its head and start with emphasis on the right of individuals. This appears to me to result in a more positive statement than the proposed draft, and also introduces the idea of a balance between individual rights, freedom and the essential needs of the planet and the community." (Larry Thompson, U.S.)
- "*freedom and dignity* are undoubtedly innate human privileges but at the same time they are *objectives to conquer*. Having the right to freedom or dignity doesn't mean that these conditions are automatically conquered. Our opinion is that these principles are attained through knowledge, exercise, education **and love**." (Vanda Chalyvopoulov et Nicholas Anastassopoulos, Greece)

## 4th principle :

- "the purpose of this principle is not clear to me and the text raises more questions than it answers. The principle may express a truth, but it does not suggest to me an action to realise the principle. What is material development not doing now in the service of human development? What do we want it to do? What is its place in the 21st century? Do we wish to suggest that differences in wealth should be reduced?" (Larry Thompson, U.S.)
- "Principle 4 raises a problem in our society. Many people are of the opinion that development in the strict sense of the word must be related to a positive improvement which can bring satisfaction and make life easier for at least the large majority of the population. When in the Charter the word *material* is added to *development*, we become extremely confused. We are of the opinion that instead of providing a perspective on the solution of a given problem *material development* brings only desolation. In our place we prefer the situation of the pygmies in the South of Cameroon, who are the only ones enjoying a life expectancy between ninety and hundred and twenty years without having recourse to so-called conventional medicine." (Dieudonné N'Koum)

## 5th principle :

- "Similarly the notion of *change* as expressed in principle 5 does not really tally with people's understanding of things in our place. I bet that with the sort of change we experience to-day in the fields of science and technology the world will soon destroy itself; because in the struggle for domination and despite the pseudo extinction of the cold war one finds oneself confronted with quite a number of factories making weapons that are immeasurably destructive and, more than ever, with the sprouting of myriads of hotbeds of tension." (Dieudonné N'Koum)
- "This draft principle gives me pause because it can be interpreted to have a *conservative, anti-change tone*. But innovation is essential if one-half of humanity is to escape grinding poverty and the fortunate among us are to continue to enjoy our luxurious lives without over-taxing the resources of Earth. (...) Also, I would presume that the innovation we wish to address is scientific or technological, rather than artistic." (Larry Thompson, U.S.)
- "The fifth principle *could be taken off* as it deals with the methodology for implementing principles and need not be a principle in itself." (Sureshwar Sinha, India)

- "The statement that human societies must not use new developments until they are sure of being able to control the present and future risks", seems to be *dogmatic and ex-cathedra*. Take "cloning", for instance, and other genetic experiments; who or what is there to prevent developments in these matters?" (Jarlath D'Souza, Bangladesh)

"The 5 principles are excellent but insufficient:

- all real democracies are constituted on the basis of *citizen participation* in social, economic, political, environmental and cultural processes;
- *peace* is the basis of the development of societies and of human beings;
- *solidarity* is the vital link to the building up of a state of well-being for all;
- *happiness for all* is not an utopia; on the contrary, it is a goal worth to be pursued." (Hamilton Faria, Brasil)

#### ***Applicability of the five proposed principles in different contexts***

Malaysia (Chan):

"Are these 5 principles applicable in my society ? Yes and no. *Yes*, in most spheres in the case of principle 1, 2, 3 and 5 but *No* in the case of principle 4. Malaysians, like many other people, are quite materialistic and selfish. I feel it would be very difficult to ask Malaysians or businesses to work hard for material betterment just for the sake of serving human development. Profit and material wealth will always be the objective. Rule 4 is a noble principle but in practice, it will be difficult to implement in most societies. Even in farming, I do not think farmers will ever switch to organic farming just so they can conserve the land and environment by forgoing the use of chemicals and pesticides."

Benin (Atidegla) :

"Yes, but there is a lot of work to be done locally by way of converting the fundamental principles into operational ones relevant to fields of action"

Togo (Amouzou) :

"In all the fields of action and particularly in the one of local development the acceptance and application of these five fundamental principles must go via information, education and communication. But *education* must be considered the cornerstone that will make it possible that these principles for a more responsible, plural and united life are inculcated in children from an early age onwards."

India (Makarand) :

"Rules of conduct have been many, especially in the spiritual traditions of India. The best example is the Buddha's eight-fold path. But in practical life, India is a society of people who constantly bend and

break rules, partly because that is the only way to survive. Interestingly, in doing so, they follow other rules. For instance, there are people who steal from institutions, but not from people; or those who wish to rob the rich, but give to the poor; or those who routinely lie in public life, but are very religious. You can get people to agree on certain principles –responsibility, plurality, acceptance of difference, and so on- but this will not solve their immediate problems, it won't give them food, shelter, clothing, drinking water, sanitation, and so on. At least not immediately.

I think that the draft charter that Pierre Calame is promoting is alright in its own way, but whether it can serve as a Universal Charter is doubtful. Actually, I have my own doubts about whether our insertion of “context-sensitive” material will make our Charter more responsive. I am full of anguished doubts. While I don't question the intention or the overall direction of the Charter process, it seems to me that much more thinking needs to go into making it universally acceptable.

I think that “Implementing Texts” may be a good idea, but again, may not work because there are so many different contexts for the problems of the world. To provide a universal prescription for change may end up being counter-productive.

I believe that the Charter should be just that—a declaration of certain principles which can improve our world. It should be simple enough for a common person to understand. It shouldn't be too long or elaborate."

Djella Tellia (Algeria/France) :

"To believe that the five proposed principles would be sufficient ... is an utopia.

Action would have to be spread over several phases: first adherence, then effective engagement."

### Chapter 3

#### *DIVERGENCES AND CONVERGENCE*

### **3.1. Main preoccupations in different contexts**

A Charter, basic text of a global civil movement, a reference text for those women and men, who want to contribute to the creation of a more responsible and more united world, how would such a text be able to reverberate in the hearts of millions of people, who long for a dignified life, if it does not reflect the main preoccupations people feel day in day out?. Given the diversity of political, economic, social and cultural contexts which our planet harbours, are there preoccupations which people share sufficiently to serve as a basis for a text acceptable to all?

Those were the initial questions inducing the participants of the Syros group to start writing about the main problems experienced in their diverse contexts. Subsequently, they compared these problems in order to deduce to what extent they were similar or divergent.

#### *Shared anxieties*

What is particularly striking in the descriptions of the main problems experienced on the different continents is the shared anxiety with respect to the "dangers to local and diverse cultures coming from a highly materialistic form of globalisation which gives priority to the profit motive and scant regard to the welfare and cultures of local people. Writers from the developed world generally delve into devices for a better future with greater material prosperity, while those from the developing countries are concerned with survival of their peoples" (Sureshwar, India). "Through the texts a cry from the South calls out against every form of oppression, against domination of the Western model based on the egoistic pursuit of profit, against consumerism, against cultural invasion. The communities in which the authors live have to resolve problems of access to food, of shelter, clothing, of living in security, of being respected in their dignity and differences, of being treated with equity and justice, of participation in the management of the common goods and of enjoying the use of them without any discrimination." (Amouzou, Togo).

Hamilton Faria (Brazil) observes that the deep anxieties which emerge from the different continents testify to "the morose situation of the world: ignorance, war, poverty, famine, diseases, destruction of moral values, demythologization, *mercantilism of the soul* (E. Morin), cultural uprooting, culture of fear, the loss of self-esteem. The gap between technological and human development is going together with fundamentalism of the market (materialism) and religious fundamentalism. The two are harmful to human development and freedom. Until now the response summoned up against the fundamentalism of the market has been a "fundamentalism based on people's roots" disguised by the mask of narrow-minded nationalism or religious violence. All that makes one think that human rights must prevail over "the roots" or more precisely over local traditions (see the

case of mutilation of African women or the submission of women in India). But it is also true that in a context where values of communities are destroyed in the name of globalization through the market, where traditional values are destroyed through individualism, stages are set which are favourable to the increase of violence. This dark scenario is hitting the countries of the South the most. But in the industrialized countries one is equally shocked by the number of tramps, drug addicts, young people without hope, prostitutes, and also by the general feeling of being cut off from one's roots and lacking community. There it is a matter of ill-being due to riches and of a civilization in trouble. But one notices at the same time an emergence of consciousness of global citizenship which expresses itself through the creation of global networks and joint action at global level."

### *Differences between the main preoccupations*

While there is a sharing of anxieties about the effects of globalization, preoccupations differ the moment one looks more closely at the sort of problems picked out as priorities in the different contexts. Those differences have to be taken very seriously in the elaboration of a Charter that would incite people to take action.

"Depending on the problems that characterise each region, some participants tend to focus more on specific issues than others. Often such issues mentioned are foreign, entirely forgotten, or exist from an opposite point of view in other countries. A good example is the case of *overpopulation* like in Bangladesh, while low birth rate tends to become a common and serious problem throughout Europe. In addition, issues brought forth in several texts may have an instructional quality expressing the experience that some already have on these issues and others need. An example of this is the case of *multicultural* societies and their means of handling problems arising from this condition, which may be a guide for societies that are entering such a phase in their history. Brazil and Malaysia for instance have a long track record in multicultural affairs and successful dealing with related issues, while other countries (such as Greece in our case) are just entering a new chapter in this direction." (Vanda Chalyvopoulov and Nicholas Anastassopoulos, Greece)

### *Nation-state, tribally based state, religiously based state*

"While the developed countries are confronted with dangers threatening ecological equilibria and face problems resulting from inequalities in the distribution of means of production and consumer goods, different priorities prevail as far as the "third world" (including the Arab world) is concerned.

It is rather a matter of facing up to a lack of democracy, to violations of individual freedom, a slowing down of human development, a being subjected to external economic domination as well as to the multiplication of civil wars of an ethical or religious nature.

The "third world" is in the process of foundering in pre-"Nation-state" systems such as the tribally based state or the religiously based one within which the notion of freedom is not recognized, neither in the philosophical sense, nor in the political sense. (...)

The modern capitalist civilization, benefiting from scientific and technological discoveries, has destroyed social infrastructures and replaced them by modern states in which the economy dominates politics

and culture. This has led to a loss of social cohesion assured in the past by traditional social bonds. That has put the individual in a situation of class oppression within and of being controlled by forces outside national borders.

To-day humanity is in need of developing forms of political organization inspired by experiences gained by institutions of civil society, political parties and the State in its management of the economy, in order to be able to bundle its efforts and to face the dangers threatening both nature and human beings." (Mohammed Ali Moukaled, Lebanon)

*Cultural vitality: a medium to waken people's conscience*

Youssoupha Gueye (Senegal), Aurélien Atidegla (Benin) and Dieudonné N'Koum (Cameroon) notice that the renewed importance attached in Africa to culture understood as "a medium to awaken people's conscience and as an instrument to set human social and economic development in motion. The common challenge (at least as far as Africa is concerned) seems to hinge on the possibility to do justice to the value of cultural heritages. But how to combine *culture* rooted in a *traditional* society with a *culture of choice* typical of *modern* societies?"

Chan Ngai Weng (Malaysia) underlines the importance of cultural vitality particularly in view of the multi-cultural character of his country: "In a multi-ethnic society like Malaysia cultural vibrancy gives us the uniqueness seldom found elsewhere. Cultural developments, seen in terms of arts, language and education, are an essential part of human development. The goals of cultural development are a sense of personal fulfilment, confident identity, realization of artistic potential, employment of talent, and improved quality of life as a whole. (...) It is culture that holds society together. Our lifestyle and habits influence how sustainably we live. Language and culture provide the context for our children's socialisation and education. Commercial traditions and cultural skills determine how we make money, whereas traditions and taste determine how we spend it. And lastly, it is our political culture that decides how well we govern ourselves and participate in civil society. Hence, cultural vibrancy must be perpetuated and encouraged in order that development is sustainable."

And Djamila Tellia (Algeria, France) concludes that " the preoccupations shown confirm the need to mobilize people around a text that recognizes the rights of societies of the South and the well-being of people with hardly any influence on the politics controlling them."

### ***3.2. Guiding principles in different contexts***

The basic question the Alliance asks itself is: how to meet the challenges in front of which humanity finds itself on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? On basis of which common guiding principles can the people of the earth act together, despite their diversity? How to mobilise them?

***Divergences***

Before they tackled the question what unites the people of the earth, participants of the Syros group tried first to detect which guiding principles for the proper functioning of society are the most dominating ones in their own respective contexts. This exercise showed that there are in fact common principles, but often differently prioritized. Moreover, the interpretation given to them in social practices can vary. Besides, it must be recognised that in different surroundings one does not always relate oneself in the same way to traditions, nor to the adjustment of traditions to changed circumstances and also not to the adoption (or imposition) of foreign ideas and practices.

The main preoccupations brought forward by the participants and forming, for them, "the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century", are obviously strongly related to the specific economic, social and political situations in their respective contexts. Where for the majority the bare minimum to survive is not assured, one insists on an equitable sharing of the resources of the earth, on economic security being guaranteed. Likewise, where freedom of political expression is hardly existing, democracy and civil rights are stressed. And where one feels oneself always hindered in the exercise of one's national freedom, questioning the domination of external forces is considered an important challenge. Along those lines one can find *common interests and challenges* in African, Asian and Latin-American countries.

However, since civilizations distinguish themselves above all by their specific cultural and religious interpretations of life and of relations between the human being and her/his environment, *principles guiding efforts to respond to those common interests and challenges can differ*. Consequently, while the "mainstream" in the Western world is still thinking in homocentric terms of *engineering*, asserting that the human being can and must plan, manage and control her/his destiny, nature and the course of events, the draft text for a Charter coming from India stresses a "new spirituality, a new holistic and integrated paradigm, a new global dharma, or *cosmic law*." And while African participants find the notion of "tolerance" too weak and bring out the importance of *solidarity* understood as mutual obligation and as interdependence, the notions of *tolerance and harmony* are considered essential in Malaysia. For Thai Buddhists the moral notion of *detachment* from desires and earthly goods is an important guiding principle, while in the Chinese context the *quest for affluence* is perfectly acceptable just as *re-enchanting the world and feasting* is in South America.

Draft Earth Charter from South Asia :

*(...) "As we move into the next millennium, we are faced with choices that are essentially qualitative and spiritual in nature. We in South Asia have had enough of the approach where the goal of the individual is to reach the top rather than commune with his fellow beings and nature. The new technological and market forces have created large scale disruption in our societies where non-dualist world views that speak of the inter-wovenness of human beings and the earth are replaced with one that is insensitive and greedy. South Asia is today a simmering cauldron of conflicts and confrontations. Apart from the conflicts*

*emerging from the oppression against the Dalits, Tribals and women, we also face ongoing wars such as the Sinhala-Tamil conflict in Jaffna or the conflict in Kashmir, not to mention a large number of serious ethnic and class insurgencies. South Asia has suffered centuries of colonisation and neo-*

*colonisation. We find ourselves in an unequal world. Apart from the more obvious crises, a large number of people are still crushed under grinding poverty. In the new political climate in South Asia concern to alleviate the plight of the poor has all but disappeared from public discourse. The media is diverting people's attention to escapist fare; celebrity news, entertainment and leisure. (...)*

*Without overlooking the serious defects in our traditional social systems, we wish to emphasise that there is much wisdom and truth to be gleaned from our cultural and social practices, be they in agriculture, in health, in the relationships between human beings and nature or the insights into the very significance of our lives. Today, we find ourselves seriously considering the 'alternatives to development' which were fostered and nurtured in south Asia.*

*The entire cosmos from the tiniest sub-atomic particle of the earth to the most distant and massive star is one unified field of sacred energy. This means that every little bit of this universe is inter-connected with every other bit and each and every bit has its own special sanctity, both individually and collectively. For us on earth, this universe, filled with infinite variety, is a perennial source of wonder and joy. (...)*

*Because the earth is a living system, it has the capacity to regenerate itself. The damage and destruction of our environment is, therefore, only temporary, not irreversible. But to restore the health of the planet, requires great mind shift from consumption to sustenance and, further, from sustenance to subsistence. A new holistic and integrated paradigm needs to be adopted to grow out of our present life styles, which are self-destructive and violating others. In this new paradigm, technology and ethics will be combined as will be politics and morality. A new global dharma will emerge which integrates the local with the global, the self with society, fact with value, lexis with praxis.*

*This dharma, haq, or cosmic law can be the basis of a new compact between the peoples and the nations of the world, between the corporations and their clientele, between human beings and the other living species. A new spirituality non-denominational, non-sectarian, trans- or poly-religious, multi-ethnic, plural and gender sensitive will help ease the barriers between human beings and between men and women of our world.*

*For world citizens and agents of social change, turning inward simultaneously with outward effort is essential, like the drawing in of the bowstring before the arrow is released, swift and sure. (...)"*

Here are some responses of participants to the question which guiding principles are considered important in their society:

Hindu context in South East Asia (Sureshwar):

- *"cosmic justice based, amongst Hindus, on their system of 'Dharma', which through a series of rebirths dispenses reactive justice within a cosmic framework or 'Writta' . Finally all souls including animals are emanations from the Supreme Being or 'Brahman', and are thus part of a common brotherhood or 'Bhaichara'. Thus benevolence to all beings and non-violence, 'Ahimsa', are part of the south Asian creed.*
- *tolerance, which is why all religions have found a home in S E Asia. On the other hand corruption, pollution of holy rivers and class despotism are also tolerated as part of one's bad fortune or 'Kismet' and are considered to be results of one's own bad deeds or 'Karma'"*

## Malaysia (Chan):

- "*harmony* is a very important concept in a multi-ethnic country like Malaysia. Without harmony, the different ethnic groups will not be able to live in peace and prosperity. In Malaysia, Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races live in harmony with one another. Hence we are very *tolerant* and respectful of each other's culture and habits. We are sensitive to each other's needs, culture and particularities and idiosyncrasies. It is also felt that we need to live in harmony with nature and the environment to preserve nature and carry out sustainable development."

## India (Makarand)

- "Words like *freedom, democracy, justice, secularism*, upon which the edifice of this country was built, now seem empty words. Everyone is engaged in a struggle for survival and the greed for more is slowly overtaking traditional cultural values. Overall, I would describe India as a country in ferment, in which, in V. S. Naipaul's words, there are "A Million Mutinies Now."
- But if I were to name some fundamental principles, they would be *freedom and democracy*, both of which have taken deep root in our polity; *sharing and solidarity*, which are a part of our traditional culture and are manifested usually *in ties of kinship or community*; the *rule of law and justice*, though seen more in its violation; *secularism or religious tolerance; pluralism and multiculturalism; economic stability and human dignity*, again both of which are more often unavailable.  
*Swatantrata* means a kind of independence. As I write this, India gears up to celebrate the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our freedom from British rule. *Nyaya* means justice, but this is very hard to find. *Suraksha* means security, again a rare commodity. *Sukh* means happiness, which amazingly isn't all that hard to find. Finally *Shanti*, or peace, again *easier to find within than without*."

## Bangladesh (D'Souza):

- *piety* ("bakhti"= worship of the Deity or for Buddhists : the inner Deity resides in Sunyata or vacuity)
- *honesty* ("sotota")
- *faithfulness* ("al-ahmin" = the islamic term; or "bishostota" or "kotha-rakha")
- *hospitality* ("othiti sheba")
- *frugality* ("mistobayita")

## Greece (Vanda and Nicholas):

- "*Freedom*, (in Greek *eleftheria*) means the potential for unconstrained and unlimited action according to one's will or the absence of coercion or suppression.  
(Etym.: The adjective free is derived from the root *leuthh*, which means, "to grow, to develop".
- *Peace*, (Iriini) means 1) the absence of any hostile action, conflict or unrest between states or within a state.  
2) The internal condition of serenity, calmness, the absence of animosity, tension or internal conflicts.  
(Etym.: The word is an ancient loan of prehellenic descent. The word is used in ancient Greek language as the opposite to the word war.)

- *Democracy, (demokratia)*: form of government according to which political power stems from the people and expresses their interest.

(Etym. : democracy :

- *dimos* : the people, the masses and specially the peasants as opposed to the few, the city dwellers.

Etym. : from the ancient (Mycenaean) root *da*, which means distribute.

- *kratos* : a group of people, race, language, religion notwithstanding, living within specific geographic boundaries and politically organized as a legal entity for the practice of authority., the aim of which is securing and distributing of justice.

Etym. : in ancient Greek the word meant "power, authority".

The first democratic reformations occur in Athens in 508 BC with Clesthenis. Since then Greek history went through various states. Nowadays the idea of democracy is established firmly and has even widely spread as a western ideal."

United States (Thompson):

- "a governmental system of '*checks and balances*' to prevent any person or institution from achieving predominance of power and influence
- *legitimacy* (acceptance of the results of elections and judicial procedures)
- *capacity for change*
- *conformity* (individual freedom is accompanied by powerful pressures to become part of a larger whole, i.o.w. to conform.)
- *optimism*
- *independence* (the U.S. was created *not* to be like Europe. Guarding our independence from the societies that we rejected -or that rejected us- is important to Americans)"

Latin America (Chihuaif, Faria and De Souza):

- *diversity*: to recognize diversity does not boil down to acceptance of the other, but is above all the acknowledgement of cultures in the broad and the deep sense of the word, as ways of life, ways of looking at life and the world; cultures also as processes of becoming.
- *belonging*: to be *on* Earth does not reflect the same view on life as being *part of* the Earth, as belonging to it. That state of being is only realized when we are filled with the ways of looking at life as transmitted by the ancestors; *to belong is to breath the Earth that allows us to live*;
- *cultural resistance*: cultural roots continue to be there despite migrations. The indigenous people of Latin America recreate spaces for their identity and culture and preserve their cultural dynamics vis à vis the globalization process;
- *democracy*: the conquest and preservation of democracy is of vital importance to plurality;
- *utopia*: utopia is alive; that encourages us to build a different world;
- *love*: love is a force that provides us with inspiration, it is the acknowledgement of and respect for diversity, it is the search for our identity, it is our being in touch with the others.

- The importance of *celebraçao* : Brazil is a country of feasts; feasts of different types, a heritage of mixed cultures and races: American Indian, black and white; these are people who ritualize their social experiences in their feasts and their dances."

Kenya (Wanjohi):

- " Gikuyu "utheriini" = litt. "in the light", "at the gaze of all" (In the West : 'transparency in governance')
- Gikuyu "waragania" = litt. making equal, especially of uneven ground. Meaning: not everyone should be given the same in equal amounts, but resources or rewards should be distributed according to merit. (fairness in English)"

Benin, Senegal (Atidegla, Diallou):

- *"solidarity and sharing and, therefore, mutual aid*
- *responsibility* (Hamidou : it implies the sort of behaviour shown by a good mother of a family)
- *autonomy*
- *security of the other*
- *plurality : tolerance, respect for oneself and for the other and, therefore, for differences* (cf. the proverb: "there are no conflicts, only misunderstandings")
- *faith"*

Togo (Amouzou):

- *"belief in God (spirituality)*
- *solidarity (as mutual obligation)*
- *respect for diversity*
- *protection of the environment (reconciliation of the human being with nature)*
- *social justice"*

Cameroon (N'Koum):

"The contribution of each person to the right course and the development of life is obligatory in our cultural context (participative solidarity) and so is respect for the elderly and submission to the rules and rites. Each individual must participate in the development of the region and in efforts to keep it on the right track. The chiefs or guides are charged with the duty to make sure that what people jointly share is steered in the right direction and that this direction is kept. This is the way in which our "basa" society is organized."

### ***3.3. A principle that unites: entitlement to life***

Discussions of the guiding principles in the different contexts, their cultural nuances, their implications for social practices and their pertinence to what is going on at global level, have led the Syros group to the

conclusion that what underlies all preoccupations and all principles, what is also most fundamentally in danger, what, consequently would have to be *the main concern of a Charter, is the entitlement to life itself.*

"Life" is a multiple relationship: it is the mystery that intertwines Life itself with all that lives, a mystery that manifests itself in life that incessantly recreates itself in nature as well as within humanity, in relations between human beings, between them and nature, in the relationship with the sacred and the cosmos.

The concern of the Charter of the Alliance would, therefore, have to go further than an "Earth Charter". That "third pillar of international life" would have to focus on what surpasses the environmental issues and all sorts of economic, social and political questions related to it. Certainly, the latter are of great importance and must be addressed, even urgently, but they arise from the main issue which is the heart of all the other ones: respect for life itself. From that respect follows a personal and collective responsibility for a durable life of our earth and all that lives on it as well as for a dignified life of all human beings.

Such a concern would do away with the homocentric spirit of earlier drafts of basic texts for the Alliance (which was the most important criticism expressed by non-western allies with respect to the platform of the Alliance and the proposition for a Charter of February 2001). Life is not created by the human being. (S)he participates in it, (s)he shares it not only with other human beings, but also with other forms of life. Life is the "sacred energy" which links everything to everything "from the tiniest sub-atomic particle of the earth to the most distant and massive star." "Earth, our home, a most beautiful planet, is a living eco-system which supports myriad life forms. We, as conscious and intelligent human beings, are the children of this eco-system. As it nourishes and sustains us, it is our responsibility to nurture and protect it." (Draft Charter from South Asia)

A Charter that sets out from this vision would be "universal" in the real sense of the word: it touches on all that exists in the world, the visible as well as the invisible. It defends something that is beyond human understanding and human engineering, but never too big to be intensely experienced deep in oneself.

It follows from the observations of the participants of the Syros group that this basic principle carries within itself with respect to human relations the need to create and leave space to the other as well as a sense of co-responsibility for her/his blossoming. The magnitude of that space and the sharing out of that responsibility will vary from one context to another, but are everywhere an integral part of the entitlement to life. It is from this vision that the principles chosen at Syros and the instruments selected to implement them ensue.

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**ALLIANCE's CHARTER****PROPOSAL SYROS GROUP****for a common ground of guiding principles****and****ways and means of putting them into practice****to be conveyed in culturally different ways of linguistic expression**

*In the face of the urgent problems of our times, individuals, communities and authorities must assume responsibility for the survival of humankind and planet Earth.*

*The Charter of the Alliance is an invitation to adopt a set of guiding principles for personal action and collective transformation.*

*The proposed guiding principles form a whole of which the elements are interconnected and interdependent.*

**DIGNITY**

The right to a life of dignity must be secured.

This is possible through guaranteeing the satisfaction of basic needs and rights.

**SOLIDARITY**

Solidarity is a necessity for equity in human relations.

This is possible through freedom of expression, information and organisation, and through formation of people.

**DIVERSITY**

The need for human diversity and the preservation of bio-diversity must be recognised and accepted.

This can be done through valuing our heritage of knowledge and wisdom, and by preserving and celebrating the diversity of living cultures world wide.

***EQUALITY***

The equal value and equal rights of human beings must be affirmed as the basis of human interaction.  
This is possible through social justice, and through re-conceiving and re-deploying power to involve people who are left out of decision making, with specific attention to women, minorities and indigenous peoples.

***PEACE***

Peace is the precondition for a just and harmonious society and world order.  
This is possible through non-violent action, mutual respect, dialogue and conflict resolution at all levels.

***RESPONSIBILITY***

Individual and collective responsibility is a pre-condition for a life of dignity for human beings and durable life of planet Earth.  
This is possible through responsible exercise of governance, science and technology, consumption, and citizenship.

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