



## *Innovating International Cooperation with Use of New Media*

Briefing paper Thematic Session EC+10 Event

### **Care for the Global Commons: Innovating International Cooperation**

Fundamental changes are needed to ensure a sustainable future and save civilisation itself. Global solutions are needed for interconnected problems, such as hunger and the food crisis, water and energy scarcity, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and global inequality.

'Global commons' refers to everything that is of common interest to people and the planet. It is a value-driven dynamic concept that has both a social and a ecological dimension.

In the social dimension our common interest is in peace, security, equity, welfare, etc. It is the context in which people can live their lives in dignity. In the ecological dimension our common interest is in the sustainable management of the world's natural resources, such as forests, oceans, soils, flora and fauna. Managing the global commons means maintaining and developing both dimensions in the interest of humankind.

Protection and advancement of the global commons is everyone's responsibility and in everyone's own interest. The tragedy of the global commons is that in our present competitive world the global commons easily become no-one's responsibility. The 'race to the bottom' in this sense is very much happening today (example: the oil leakage in the Mexican gulf). Inequality and environmental degradation lead to loss of life, insecurity, war and risks – and a less stable world. It is therefore in our own individual and collective enlightened interest that men, women and children all over the world can participate in social-economic and political processes. This is essential now and in the coming decades of global population growth.

International Cooperation aiming at a sustainable, just and peaceful world is particularly important because countries and peoples depend more and more on each other. To put in a pro-active way: Wo-Mankind needs to and can transform its relationships with the planet and itself from a utilitarian and competitive model to a cooperative one, which can lead to great (and different) potential for all. This needs an ethical and practical commitment to life in all its diversity.

This requires a true mind shift, away from the (postcolonial) paradigm that has been dominant during the last fifty years. The traditional agenda for international cooperation was usually driven by a combination of guilt, human concern, and mostly Western vested interests. Western countries (and the multilateral institutions they have dominated) influenced development processes in developing countries in many ways through aid and its associated conditionalities, and through its own incoherent economic and climate policies. That time is now over. We need a new model of international policies, inspired by the Earth Charter.

In this era of globalisation, all living beings are connected and interdependent. This holds true not only for individuals or countries, but also for political, economic, social, and ecological systems. This

means we need to find a new balance in international power relations and new systems of checks and balances to be able to safeguard and develop the global commons, which are essential for our very survival as a planet, as well as for our own future.

International Policies for managing and developing the global commons go beyond 'aid' or 'development cooperation' which as concepts and practice are still based on the north-south paradigm, unequal power relationships and the exploitation of old and new scarcities. The new international approach requires an acknowledgement of our global interdependence, and implies that all governments, corporates and civil partners move beyond short term vested interests and power positions to working together to save our planet; bio-diversity as well as our peoples in their cultural diversity. This means finding new solutions together for climate change, the food crisis, water and energy shortage etc, as well as finding ways to engage the potential of all men, women and youth in a cooperative and non- competitive manner. Some call this an evolutionary shift from competition to cooperation needed for the survival of this planet and its people.

All actors have a role to play: governments, politicians, knowledge centres, religious and faith leaders, non governmental organisations, businesses, the media and youth networks. All citizens can play many different roles in all kinds of national and international initiatives: in implementation projects, as watchdogs, through research, and by influencing policies and the public mindset.

The increasing force of young people in these processes should not be underestimated, and can be further stimulated. Innovation of International Cooperation making use of new media such as social networks is for a important part developed and catalysed by youth.

Business actors can also make a significant difference: by being coherent and by creating opportunities for decent, green work. The broad private sector (large and small) in all its diversity should play a larger role in debates and policy development concerning the global commons. Business should 'live' the decent work agenda and the four core labor standards of the ILO, underwritten by the private sector itself as well as Trade Unions and Governments.

Within all this, women play a crucial role in local development, agriculture, micro financing, social cohesion, education and healthcare, as well as finding new local solutions for water and energy scarcities. The 'feminization of poverty' that is currently taking place can be transformed if the inequality between the sexes is addressed and if women are stimulated to use their qualities, energy and voice to achieve sustainable development. All actors should cooperate to increase the role of women in all aspects of their organisations in order to achieve the much needed coherence in international policy and effectiveness in practice. In this sense solving the gender gap and stimulating women's leadership at local, national and global level must be a central element of the innovation of International Cooperation for the management and development of the global commons.

What is needed is a broad and coherent international cooperation policy centered around the global commons agenda, and which requires stronger global and complementary governance with a clear role for the corporate sector and civil society.

### **Making Use of New Media**

One of the main goals of the Earth Charter Initiative is to raise awareness worldwide of the Earth Charter and to promote understanding of its inclusive ethical vision. This can only be achieved through international cooperation and more and more with the use of new media.

The ultimate purpose for this effort of raising awareness about the Earth Charter is to a) inspire

change in values and attitudes, at all levels of society and from the youngest to the decision makers, and b) motivate people to take positive actions that will contribute to build a sustainable and just global community.

Following the decentralized policy of the Initiative an EC Communication and Media Task Force was formed with the vision to spearhead global alliances that will work collaborative to massively and rapidly amplify basic values helping form the necessary ethical foundation for the emerging world community. It is clear that the use of new media is an imperative for reaching out to people worldwide.

The purpose of this session is to explore ways in which the use of New Media can strengthen international cooperation and further promote the Earth Charter. Also to find ways to enhance the media interest and collaboration with the Earth Charter Initiative.

**Moderators:** Pieter Broertjes and Sylvia Borren (Worldconnectors)

**Reporter** (for the written report): Anne-Katrien Denissen, NCDO

**Brief introductory remarks / participants contributions:**

- Jos van Gennip, NCDO
- Fernanda Baumhardt, EC Communication Task Force, Brazil
- Daniel Foa, 51 Sim
- Anna Chojnacka, 1%Club and Worldconnectors
- Mike Brantjes, The Power of We
- Willemijn Kemp, Vital Interest and Our Common Future 2.0

**Special possible elements within the session:**

- Launch of cooperation between the Earth Charter and and The 1%Club
- Results Worldconnectors research social media (FLAME)
- Video portraits and Viral "It Starts with One"

**Questions to guide the discussion:**

1. What are the new trends of international cooperation? What is the role of new media in international cooperation and in initiatives such as the Earth Charter?
2. How can the Earth Charter be introduced to millions of people in different levels of society, without any major governmental financial support for it?
3. What are the most appropriate type of new media and social networks the Earth Charter should rely on to spread its message? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different type of new media?

**Links:**

- Earth Charter webpage on 'It Starts with One' campaign  
<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/articles/468/1/Launch-of-EC10-celebrations-and-communication-campaign-/Page1.html>
- 1% Club website <http://1procentclub.nl/projects/>
- The Broker online discussion platform on International Cooperation <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/en/Online-discussions/From-Aid-to-Global-Justice/Less-pretension-more-ambition>
- Our Common Future 2.0 <http://www.ourcommonfuture.nl/nl/welkom/>
- Worldconnectors Round Table for People and the Planet: <http://www.worldconnectors.nl>
- The Power of We <http://www.vimeo.com/12709055>