

### Earth Charter and GRI at Amsterdam Global Conference

The Earth Charter Initiative and NCDO, jointly with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), hosted a special high-level event on Thursday 8 May 2008 during the Amsterdam Global Conference on Sustainability and Transparency.

The event, which was hosted by Ruud Lubbers, former Dutch Prime Minister and Earth Charter Commissioner, had three main objectives. These were:

- to announce a strategic alliance between the Earth Charter and GRI to encourage their users to also take advantage of the other's instrument;
- to launch a guidance paper on how the Earth Charter, GRI and the UN Global Compact can be used to build a more just and sustainable world; and
- to stimulate discussion on how the Earth Charter can be used more widely in the corporate social responsibility context.

Keynote speakers included the Dutch Environment Minister, Jacqueline Cramer; Constance Kane, Vice Chair of the GRI Stakeholder Council; Herman Mulder, independent CSR expert; and Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, Earth Charter Commissioner. The paper 'The Earth Charter, GRI and the Global Compact: Guidance to Users on the Synergies in Application and Reporting' was presented by its lead author, Paul Hohnen.

Highlights of the event included:

- Jacqueline Cramer's account of her past work on CSR, and her belief that the Earth Charter could play an important role in helping inspire a company's vision on sustainable development.
- Constance Kane's recommendation that the guidance paper should be widely read, and her hope that the Earth Charter could be a 'guiding star' to provide overarching guidance to the GRI and its users.
- Herman Mulder's caution that CSR issues differ by company; effective responses needed to be developed from the local level. The Earth Charter, as an internationally relevant framework, offered valuable guidance.
- Awraham Soetendorp's powerful reminder of the importance of the spiritual, ethical and community dimensions of human activity. This message was explicit in the Earth Charter.

GRI Deputy Chief Executive Teresa Fogelberg welcomed the alliance with the Earth Charter, underlining the shared missions of the two initiatives and the opportunities they offered users to improve their contribution to sustainable development. She looked forward to hearing progress on how business is using the Earth Charter and GRI at the next Amsterdam Global Conference in 2010.

Other speakers included NCDO's Lisette van Rhijn, Matthijn de Boer of Sustain Train/Atmosphere, and Petrobras Executive Manager Antonio Sergio Oliveira Santana.