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### **REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE BONN DECLARATION**

#### **SUMMARY**

In pursuance of 177 EX/Decision 9 and 34 C/Resolution 19, this report was prepared to provide information on the UNESCO World Conference on “Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the United Nations Decade” (31 March-2 April 2009, Bonn, Germany, organized by UNESCO and the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO) and the Bonn Declaration.

1. The UNESCO World Conference on “Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the United Nations Decade” brought together 900 participants (53% male and 47% female), drawn from 147 countries. One hundred and twenty-three of UNESCO’s Member States (including three Associate Members) were officially represented. The Conference aimed to:
  - (a) highlight the essential contribution of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to all of education and to achieving quality education (“Why is ESD relevant?”). Indeed, ESD, which is relevant to all types, levels and settings of education, is an approach to teaching and learning based on the ideals and principles that underlie sustainability. Since ESD engages with such key issues as human rights, poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, climate change, gender equality, corporate social responsibility and protection of indigenous cultures in an integral way, it constitutes a comprehensive approach to quality education and learning. By dealing with the problems faced by humanity in a globalized world, ESD will shape the purposes and content of all education in the period ahead – ESD is, indeed, education for the future;
  - (b) promote international exchange on ESD (“What can we learn from each other?”). All sustainable development programmes, including ESD, must consider the three spheres of sustainability – environment, society and economy, with culture as an underlying dimension. As ESD addresses the local contexts of sustainability, it will take many forms around the world. The sharing of best practices and different experiences and perspectives is vital for identifying key needs and for designing viable approaches to ESD;

- (c) carry out a stock-taking of DESD implementation (“What have we achieved so far, what are the lessons learnt?”). The empirical results as well as the global and regional reports from the first Monitoring and Evaluation exercise – carried out by UNESCO – provided input into discussions on the implementation of the Decade. The successes to date were celebrated and presented, while the obstacles encountered and lessons learnt were also discussed; and
- (d) develop strategies for the way ahead (“Where do we want to go from here?”). It is important that the analysis of implementation to date and identification of past and emerging challenges and opportunities lead to the development of new strategies for the second half of the Decade. These may include, among others, the further integration of ESD in educational policies, plans and programmes; the mobilization of more resources for ESD; the establishment of effective partnerships (especially through North-South and South-South cooperation); and the inclusion of stakeholders not involved in implementing the Decade to date. Emerging sustainable development issues and the educational responses to them were discussed in this context.

2. The opening session helped to frame the context of the Conference and set the tone for ensuing discussions and subsequent sessions. This was done through several keynote addresses, including a video message from Queen Rania of Jordan and an inspirational speech by Ms Graça Machel, who reminded participants of the need to keep the promises made in Jomtien and Dakar regarding education and sustainable human development.

3. Plenary sessions provided opportunities for all participants to be introduced to and discuss various issues. In particular, one plenary session was focused on the DESD Monitoring and Evaluation process, with a presentation of the key findings of the draft global report on the context and structures of ESD, as well as regional perspectives. The final plenary session was the occasion for all participants to adopt the Bonn Declaration.

4. A high-level segment gave 47 ministers and deputy-ministers of education the opportunity to discuss achievements in their respective countries and the way ahead regarding implementation of the DESD, especially in the perspective of ESD’s contribution to quality education. This session stressed that ESD is one of the key drivers towards sustainability, the need to accelerate actions in the second half of the Decade, and the urgency of moving towards more sustainable practices.

5. Twenty-two workshops addressed specific thematic and strategic issues with regard to ESD. They were grouped according to the four thematic clusters of the conference, which were: relevance of ESD for key sustainable development challenges; building partnerships to promote ESD; capacity development for ESD; and ESD and the teaching-learning process.

6. Project-based workshops were held in and around Bonn, and provided participants with the opportunity to exchange views on best practice with the organizers of local ESD projects in the region and with one another. The project-based workshops complemented the on-site conference programme by providing “hands-on” experiences of ESD.

7. An ESD Projects Exhibition at the conference venue presented 25 concrete good practice projects selected from all over the world. Five projects per world region, representing different ESD approaches and stakeholders, were on display.

8. The day before the World Conference, a workshop on “Young ESD Voices from around the World” brought together 25 young people from different parts of the world who have demonstrated engagement in ESD. Workshop participants discussed ESD in their respective countries and looked at what should be the main emphases for the second half of the DESD, as well as what their joint and individual engagement towards implementing the DESD in its second half could be. Workshop results were presented at the Opening Plenary of the Conference. The youth workshop participants then took part in the Conference.

9. The Conference website ([www.esd-world-conference-2009.org/](http://www.esd-world-conference-2009.org/)) can be consulted for further information on the different conference sessions. The final report of the Bonn Conference will be made available in time for the 2009 UNESCO General Conference.

### **The Bonn Declaration**

10. The Bonn Declaration reflects the discussions held during the Conference and provides a strategic orientation for the second half of the Decade. It attests the importance of ESD in the current world situation. It calls for making a compact with the global DESD movement aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competencies and strengthening values and attitudes oriented towards a transition to a more just, fair and viable world.

11. The Bonn Declaration was drafted through a transparent, inclusive, participatory and results-oriented approach to ensure its relevance for ESD and the Decade. In particular, in light of the present context of financial and economic crises and global challenges, it places emphasis on several key areas, which include: reinforcing the educational response to sustainable development challenges; developing and building capacities for adapting to change; sharing knowledge and experiences; and reinforcing synergies between different education and development initiatives.

12. The Bonn Declaration will serve as the backbone for the development of the post-Bonn process within the framework of the DESD. It is to be noted that the participants in the Bonn Conference welcomed the offer announced by the Government of Japan to host the end-of-decade world conference on ESD, which would be jointly organized by UNESCO and the Government of Japan. The full Bonn Declaration can be found in the Annex of this document.

### **Moving into the second half of the Decade: towards a strategic roadmap for the DESD**

13. The pre-Bonn events leading up to the World Conference, the findings from the DESD Global Monitoring and Evaluation Framework regarding the context and structure of work on ESD, discussions during the various sessions of the Bonn Conference itself and the Bonn Declaration highlighted key strategic areas of focus to put knowledge into action and promote further progress in ESD during the next five years:

- addressing global challenges through ESD;
- developing capacities;
- further re-orienting education and training to address sustainability concerns;
- building and sharing knowledge, as well as generating new knowledge through research;
- advocating for ESD, and increasing awareness and understanding of sustainability;
- reinforcing/enhancing synergies between different education and development initiatives; and
- extending and strengthening ESD partnerships.

14. UNESCO, with the help of the DESD Reference Group, the Monitoring & Evaluation Expert Group, the International Advisory Group for the World Conference, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee for the DESD, has already started to design a multi-stakeholder consultative process to develop a strategic roadmap for the second half of the Decade. This roadmap will seek to ensure ownership and commitment on the part of member States and key stakeholder groups for an accelerated implementation of the rest of the DESD. The preparation of this roadmap will involve, among other considerations, updating aspects of the International Implementation Scheme in light of the recommendations from the Bonn Conference.

15. The post-Bonn process will build on the discussions and lessons from the Bonn Conference. The DESD concerns all stakeholders, who can contribute to the success of the Decade and be

agents of change at their own level, in their own communities and nations. As it is a United Nations Decade, all United Nations agencies must be mobilized behind and engage with the Decade. UNESCO has to enhance its leadership and coordination role, in cooperation with all stakeholders. Member States must be in the driver's seat for ensuring the implementation of the DESD at national level. UNESCO, as lead agency of the DESD, is committed to continue mobilizing stakeholders around ESD and to lead this global movement to a successful completion of the Decade.

16. The process of putting together this strategic roadmap will involve multi-stakeholder consultations through various mediums, including at upcoming conferences (such as CONFINTEA VI and the World Conference on Higher Education) and other events, as well as through electronic means. A first outline of the post-Bonn process and strategic roadmap will be presented to the 182nd session of the Executive Board in the autumn of 2009.

17. The fully-fledged strategic roadmap for the second half of the DESD will be presented along with the mid-term progress report on the implementation of the Decade (as requested by United Nations General Assembly resolution 59/237) to the United Nations General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session in the autumn of 2010.

18. UNESCO, together with the conference participants, would like to express its sincere thanks to the Government of Germany for their generosity in co-organizing and hosting the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Bonn.

## ANNEX

### Bonn Declaration

**WE, THE PARTICIPANTS GATHERED AT THE UNESCO WORLD CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT HELD IN BONN, GERMANY ON 31 MARCH TO 2 APRIL 2009, ISSUE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT AND CALL FOR ACTION:**

1. Despite unprecedented economic growth in the twentieth century, persistent poverty and inequality still affect too many people, especially those who are most vulnerable. Conflicts continue to draw attention to the need for building a culture of peace. The global financial and economic crises highlight the risks of unsustainable economic development models and practices based on short-term gains. The food crisis and world hunger are an increasingly serious issue. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns are creating ecological impacts that compromise the options of current and future generations and the sustainability of life on Earth, as climate change is showing.

2. A decade into the twenty-first century, the world faces substantial, complex and interlinked development and lifestyle challenges and problems. The challenges arise from values that have created unsustainable societies. The challenges are interlinked, and their resolution requires stronger political commitment and decisive action. We have the knowledge, technology and skills available to turn the situation around. We now need to mobilize our potential to make use of all opportunities for improving action and change.

3. The impacts of unsustainable development, priorities, responsibilities and capacity differ between regions and between developing and developed countries. All countries will need to work collaboratively to ensure sustainable development now and in the future. Investment in education for sustainable development (ESD) is an investment in the future, and can be a life-saving measure, especially in post-conflict and least developed countries.

4. Building on the Jomtien, Dakar and Johannesburg promises, we need a shared commitment to education that empowers people for change. Such education should be of a quality that provides the values, knowledge, skills and competencies for sustainable living and participation in society and decent work. The Education for All agenda underlines that the availability of basic education is critical for sustainable development. It similarly emphasizes pre-school learning, education for rural people and adult literacy. Achievements in literacy and numeracy contribute to educational quality, and will also be critical to the success of ESD.

5. Through education and lifelong learning, we can achieve lifestyles based on economic and social justice, food security, ecological integrity, sustainable livelihoods, respect for all life forms and strong values that foster social cohesion, democracy and collective action. Gender equality, with special reference to the participation of women and girl children in education, is critical for enabling development and sustainability. Education for sustainable development is immediately necessary for securing sustainable life chances, aspirations and futures for young people.

#### **Education for sustainable development in the twenty-first century**

6. Education for sustainable development is setting a new direction for education and learning for all. It promotes quality education, and is inclusive of all people. It is based on values, principles and practices necessary to respond effectively to current and future challenges.

7. ESD helps societies to address different priorities and issues: *inter alia*, water, energy, climate change, disaster and risk reduction, loss of biodiversity, food crises, health risks, social vulnerability and insecurity. It is critical for the development of new economic thinking. ESD contributes to creating resilient, healthy and sustainable societies through a systemic and integrated approach. It brings new relevance, quality, meaning and purpose to education and

training systems. It involves formal, non-formal and informal education contexts, and all sectors of society in a lifelong learning process.

8. ESD is based on values of justice, equity, tolerance, sufficiency and responsibility. It promotes gender equality, social cohesion and poverty reduction and emphasizes care, integrity and honesty, as articulated in the Earth Charter. ESD is underpinned by principles that support sustainable living, democracy and human well-being. Environmental protection and restoration, natural resource conservation and sustainable use, addressing unsustainable production and consumption patterns, and the creation of just and peaceful societies are also important principles underpinning ESD.

9. ESD emphasizes creative and critical approaches, long-term thinking, innovation and empowerment for dealing with uncertainty, and for solving complex problems. ESD highlights the interdependence of environment, economy, society, and cultural diversity from local to global levels, and takes account of past, present and future.

10. Linked to different needs and the concrete living conditions of people, ESD provides the skills to find solutions and draws on practices and knowledge embedded in local cultures as well as in new ideas and technologies.

### **Progress in the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development**

11. During the first five years of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), led and coordinated by UNESCO, many countries have made progress in implementing ESD and have designed innovative policy frameworks. A number of United Nations agencies, NGOs, regional bodies, and partner networks are engaged in concrete activities that support specific areas of ESD. Many people and organizations are committed and engaged in action. Efforts towards better understanding, promotion, implementation and assessment of the quality of ESD are underway. A global monitoring and evaluation framework has been designed. Efforts at the global level have been complemented by regional strategies and initiatives.

12. We recognize that education is a significant factor in improving human well-being. We now have the knowledge and experience available to significantly improve the contents, methods and purposes of education. We know how to begin re-orienting education systems to emphasize lifelong learning. Through ESD, we are learning how to improve links between formal, non-formal and informal education. We know the importance of strengthening and sharing knowledge of educational change processes.

13. Science has provided us with a better knowledge of climate change and of the Earth's life-support systems; it has gathered significant knowledge about HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, heart diseases, and other serious health challenges. We know more about natural systems, and human impacts on them, and the ways that biodiversity supports our well-being. We know that current economic thinking has to change, and that there is a need to avoid unsustainable production and consumption and promote and support the emergence of "sustainably developed" countries. Social science has provided insight into ethical, cultural, cognitive and affective aspects of human development, as well as sociologies of change.

14. We now need to put this knowledge into action. This is especially important to strengthen and extend the outcomes of the DESD in the next five years, but also to ensure longer term implementation of ESD.

### **A call for action**

15. The progress of ESD remains unevenly distributed and requires different approaches in different contexts. In the coming years, there is a clear need for both developed and developing countries, civil society and international organisations to make significant efforts to:

*At policy level in Member States*

- (a) **Promote ESD's contribution to all of education and to achieving quality education**, with particular regard to fostering the linkages between ESD and EFA within a coherent and systemic approach. Foster the goals of the ESD agenda in international fora and at the national level.
- (b) **Increase public awareness and understanding about sustainable development and ESD**, by mainstreaming and expanding the learning and insights gained in the first five years of the DESD into public awareness policies and programmes and various forms of informal learning. This should include promoting the role and contribution of the media for fostering public awareness and understanding of sustainability issues. It should also include capacity-building of media professionals.
- (c) **Mobilize adequate resources and funding in favour of ESD**, in particular through integrating ESD into national development policy and budgetary frameworks, into United Nations common country programming processes and other country-level policy frameworks (such as sector-wide approaches), as well as into EFA and MDG initiatives. Promote and include ESD in the priorities of foundations and donors.
- (d) **Re-orient education and training systems to address sustainability concerns through coherent policies at national and local levels**. Develop and implement ESD policies through co-ordinated inter-sectoral/inter-ministerial approaches that also involve business and the corporate sector, civil society, local communities and the scientific community.
- (e) **Develop and strengthen existing international, regional and national enabling mechanisms and cooperation for ESD that respect cultural diversity**. Establish regional and country-level committees, networks and communities of practice for ESD that strengthen local-national, and national-global links, and that enhance North-South-South and South-South co-operation.

*At practice level*

- (f) **Support the incorporation of sustainable development issues using an integrated and systemic approach in formal education as well as in non-formal and informal education at all levels**, in particular through the development of effective pedagogical approaches, teacher education, teaching practice, curricula, learning materials, and education leadership development, and also by recognizing the significant contribution of non-formal education and informal learning as well as vocational and work-place learning. Sustainable development is a cross-cutting theme with relevance to all disciplines and sectors.
- (g) **Reorient curriculum and teacher education programmes to integrate ESD into both pre-service and in-service programmes**. Support teacher education institutions, **teachers and professors** to network, develop, and research sound **pedagogical practice**. Specifically support teachers to develop ESD strategies that can work with large class sizes, and to evaluate ESD learning processes.
- (h) Promote evidence-informed policy dialogue on ESD, drawing upon relevant **research, monitoring and evaluation strategies**, and the **sharing and recognition of good practices**. Develop national ESD indicators that inform the effective implementation and review of ESD outcomes and processes.
- (i) **Develop and extend ESD partnerships to integrate ESD into training, vocational education and workplace learning** by involving civil society, public and private sectors, NGOs, and development partners. ESD should become an integral part of the training of

leaders in business, industry, trade union, non-profit and voluntary organizations, and the public services. Re-orient TVET programmes to include ESD.

- (j) **Involve youth in the design and implementation of ESD.** Engage the commitment, solidarity and potential of youth and their organisations and networks in enhancing ESD. Foster young people's ownership of ESD questions and issues.
- (k) **Enhance the major contribution and key role of civil society** in stimulating debate and public participation, and initiating ESD actions. Explore ways to further this involvement and commitment.
- (l) **Value and give due recognition to the important contribution of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge systems for ESD** and value different cultural contributions in promoting ESD.
- (m) ESD should actively promote **gender equality**, as well as create conditions and strategies that enable women to share knowledge and experience of bringing about social change and human well-being.
- (n) **Develop knowledge through ESD networking.** Identify and support schools, universities and other higher education and research institutions, education centres and education networks that could serve as centres of expertise and innovation that develop and share knowledge, and create resources for ESD. Explore the potential of specific geographical and bioregional sites which can serve as spatially defined "laboratories" for ESD.
- (o) Encourage and enhance **scientific excellence, research and new knowledge development** for ESD through the **involvement of higher education institutions and research networks** in ESD. Mobilize the core functions of universities: teaching, research and community engagement to strengthen global and local knowledge of ESD, and utilize the UNESCO ESD Chairs and UNESCO programme networks in this process. Establish institutional and organizational structures that facilitate flexibility, student participation, and multidisciplinary programmes and develop model projects that can respond to the complexity and urgency of ESD. Reward structures should be developed and implemented to support ESD initiatives and research in higher education.
- (p) **Develop institutional mechanisms** during the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and other ongoing Decades, such as the United Nations Decade for Action "Water for Life", that will ensure that ESD continues to be implemented beyond those Decades.
- (q) **Engage the expertise available within the United Nations system** to strengthen ESD in key sustainable development conventions; for example, those focusing on biodiversity, climate change, desertification and intangible cultural heritage.
- (r) **Intensify efforts in education and training systems to address critical and urgent sustainability challenges** such as climate change, water and food security by developing specific action plans and/or programmes within the DESD umbrella and partnership framework.

16. The participants in the 2009 World ESD Conference request UNESCO, as lead agency responsible for the DESD, to:

- (a) Enhance its leadership and co-ordination role for the DESD based on the International Implementation Scheme in co-operation with other UN agencies and programmes such as UNEP, UNU, the EFA convening agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank) – among others, and incorporate ESD into "one United Nations" strategies at country level, particularly through UNDAF processes.

- (b) Support member states and other partners in the implementation of the DESD, particularly through upstream capacity-building and policy advice on the development of coherent national strategies, monitoring and evaluation, recognising and sharing good practices on ESD, advocacy and global partnership development, with due consideration to post-conflict and least developed countries.
- (c) Represent and/or promote the ESD agenda in other major education and development forums such as international conferences and negotiations such as the G8, G20, Copenhagen Climate Change Conference, EFA High-Level Group, United Nations Chief Executives Board, and UNESCO world conferences (among other ongoing events and activities).
- (d) Utilize the expertise that exists within UNESCO biosphere reserves, world heritage sites and other science, culture and education programmes, such as TTISSA (Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa), ASPnet schools and LIFE (Literacy Initiative for Empowerment) to further ESD objectives and ensure that key priorities for ESD are integrated into longer term programmes and strategies within UNESCO.
- (e) Promote ESD-related research through UNESCO's programmes in order to enhance the quality and evidence-base of ESD. Further develop the global monitoring and evaluation system to evaluate ESD and take initiatives to develop international strategies and practices that can lead to a successful conclusion of the DESD with visible and concrete outcomes.
- (f) Highlight the relevance and importance of education and training in the United Nations Summit on Climate Change (COP 15) in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009 in consultation and co-operation with other partners.
- (g) Intensify efforts and initiatives to put climate change education higher on the international agenda, in the framework of the DESD, in the context of UNESCO's strategy for action on climate change, and as a component of United Nations-wide action.

17. Furthermore, the participants in this conference undertake to work towards implementation of this Declaration.

18. The participants encourage the mobilization of adequate funding in support of the recommendations contained in this Declaration.

19. The participants in the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development express their gratitude to the German government for hosting this conference, and welcome the intention announced by the Government of Japan to host jointly with UNESCO the end-of-decade world conference on ESD.