

Youth Statement on “Vision, Values and Action for Education for Sustainable Development”

We, 160 young people from all regions of the world have participated in the international Youth Future Forum “Vision, Values and Action” in Bad Honnef, Germany, from 23 -25 January 2009 to contribute to the success of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development from a young perspective.

Never before did we have a deeper understanding of the interrelated global challenges that threaten our very survival on this planet: Despite all international efforts, every three seconds, another child under 5 is dying from malnutrition, easily curable diseases and insufficient access to clean water. While 20 percent of the world population consumes more than 80 percent of the world’s natural resources, the consequences of this unsustainable conduct are most severely felt by the most poor and vulnerable who have the lowest impact on the causes of such changes. At the same time, the gap between what we *know* and what we *do* about these challenges has never been greater. We believe that education is crucial to bridge this gap and bring about the worldwide shift towards sustainable development.

As representatives of the 2020 / 2050 generation, who will have to face the consequences of today’s behaviour and operations, we would like to convey a sense of urgency to the participants of the World Conference: We cannot wait any longer, the time to act is now! We need a reorientation of education. The governments of the world must redouble their efforts to implement the vision, values and practices of education for sustainable development into all levels of education and learning. To fill these concepts with life, the governments have the duty to listen to the young who are inheriting the benefits of their successes but also the results of their omissions!

Together in hope, we are proposing five core priority areas for the second half of the DESD. These areas are based on the ethical framework of the Earth Charter and we understand them as interdependent and indivisible. As values can be interpreted in various ways we tried to find a closer definition based on our understanding. We are offering our perspective on the visions to strive for, the values to transmit and the actions to take.

Ethics of sustainability

We envision a world, in which everybody lives, feels, and acts as a World Citizen, a world where we all treat the earth as our home and love our neighbour as well as the not yet born.

In order to realize this vision, the following values need to be transmitted:

- The basis for creating the consciousness of global citizenship is the belief in the goodness of humans.
- We have to learn to be confident and satisfied with what we *are* instead of what we *have*.
- Education for morally responsible world citizens has to transmit the values of compassion, respect and tolerance.
- ESD shall promote appreciation of diversity and enable people to take up their role within culture and nature.
- This strengthens a real feeling of holistic connectedness with neighbours and nature.

To implement these values into all levels of education and learning the following actions need to be taken:

- We demand free access to education for all.
- Holistic education has to include ethics.
- Education for sustainable world citizenship promotes inquisitive minds and enables individuals to form differentiated opinions that they feel empowered to act upon.
- The pole star for teaching should be on involving and experiencing rather than informing.
- Dissenting opinions are a chance to reflect and grow and should be listened to rather than being muted.
- Exchange programmes have to be opened for all age-groups, levels of education and social status.

For us to become caring *World Citizens* this vision and these values have to be promoted in all forms of education: formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Economy and Ecology

We envision that in the future there will be a paradigm shift of economic thinking from exploitation of the global ecosystems towards benefitting all life on this planet.

In order to realize this vision, the following values need to be transmitted:

- Nature is the essence of all economic processes; therefore its intrinsic value has to be respected in the economic circle.
- Respect for all forms of life leading to an economy that equally serves human beings and the ecosystem
- ESD based on three principles: awareness and understanding of problems and motivation to act
- Equity in terms of equal and universal satisfaction of basic needs

To implement these values into all levels of education and learning the following actions need to be taken:

- ESD should emphasize the interdependence of ecology and economy.
- ESD should encourage achieving synergies through global partnership and collaboration at all levels.
- Traditional knowledge should be considered equally important as scientific knowledge

Social and economic justice

We envision an economically and socially just world. We believe that change must start with ourselves as individuals. By promoting education that enables us to think beyond ourselves, beyond here, beyond now, we will mobilise more and more conscious people for a real civil society and an economy that is people-centred. Development should no longer be measured by economic growth but by dignity and quality of life for every single person.

In order to realize this vision, the following values need to be transmitted:

- Solidarity as unity based on interests
- Respect as esteeming everybody equally
- Compassion as sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it
- Tolerance as sympathy for belief and practices of others
- Equity in terms of equal rights, and non-discrimination

To implement these values into all levels of education and learning the following actions need to be taken:

- Social and economic injustice can be fought by educating each person in social action. Education should serve the well-being of everyone. It is important that different opinions on social injustice should be taught in early classes. Precondition for this is that teachers are educated and more money for education is provided.
- It is necessary to go different ways to reach the people with informal education which should be related to each cultural and social background, e.g. the use of new media, celebrities who represent a sustainable and just lifestyle, arts, organising events, workshops and working in networks.
- It is necessary to sensitize leaders and managers for the problems of social and economic injustice so that they realize that the first goal of companies should not be the profit but the well-being of people and nature.

Peace, nonviolence, and future conflicts

We envision a world without war.

In order to realize this vision, the following values need to be transmitted:

- Respect for life
- Fair distribution of resources based on fair multilateral agreements
- Complete rejection of war as a political tool and enforcement of mediation

To implement these values into all levels of education and learning the following actions need to be taken:

- Teach mediation skills as well as knowledge on local and global issues
- Enhance intercultural exchange and communication through scholarships, world conferences, internships, youth participation, political leadership education etc.
- Raise awareness for the responsible consumption of resources
- Make peace education an essential component of ESD

Participation and Democracy

We envision participation to become a universal principle which increases the possibility for relationships among humans based on solidarity and recognition of their responsibilities for themselves and their surroundings.

In order to realize this vision, the following values need to be transmitted:

- Respect for a diversity of opinions and openness for dialogue
- Interculturalism
- Solidarity
- Recognition of personal rights and responsibilities
- Empathy, acceptance and understanding of others

To implement these values into all levels of education and learning the following actions need to be taken:

- Conduct training of educators in the field of participation
- Strengthen the cooperation between educators and civil society
- Establish national research groups on participation in ESD
- Involve local stakeholders as facilitators for the improvement of participatory processes
- Enable intercultural dialogue by increasing support for exchange across cultural borders

There is a need to initiate a public discussion about the values and perspectives that are central to enable each human-being to make ethical decisions related to justice, environmental protection and peace – to create a different future. It is most pressing for us to clarify that we are not only dreaming of a better world but that we are convinced that this dream can turn into reality. We are ready to take action now!