



EDUATION for Sustainable Development
United Nations Decade 2005-2014

Regional Guiding Framework of Education for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region



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**UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States
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- **This document has been prepared by a group of Programme Specialists and Experts from UNESCO, UN Organizations and Arab States, as part of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)- Phase One (2005-2007).**

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Foreword

UNESCO Regional Offices for Education and Science in the Arab region (Beirut and Cairo) are pleased to introduce this document for the use of officials, experts and specialists involved in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development-DESD (2005-2014), in order to encourage Member States and in particular the Arab countries to prepare strategies and mechanisms of cooperation according to the global guidelines to achieve the UN DESD objectives. The UN DESD objectives include the following: improve and develop education and training programmes at all levels to meet education for sustainable development (ESD) objectives; reorient active learning and teaching approaches on ESD; increase public awareness on concepts of sustainable development; and provide education and training opportunities for all groups of society on ESD.

The preparation of the Regional Guiding Framework of Education for Sustainable Development for the Arab Region came after two regional workshops organized on DESD within UNESCO's programme in the Arab region during 2006-2007 (Alexandria, Egypt, May 2007 and Damascus, Syria, July 2007). Most of the Arab countries have been involved in the preparation of this document, through special data collection forms (ESD matrix) sent to all National Commissions for UNESCO to identify areas of priorities and difficulties encounter the development and planning of national and sub-regional actions on ESD/DESD in the Arab region. The ESD Focal Points had discussed the first draft of the document during the ESD Regional Expert Meeting (Amman, 2-4 March 2008), organized in cooperation with National Commission for UNESCO and the Higher Council for Science and Technology in Jordan.

We would like to acknowledge the effort of experts and specialists who have contributed to the preparation of the Framework: Dr. Abubakr Badawi, Egypt; Mr. Ossama Ghneim, Lebanon; Dr. Sulieman Sulieman, UNESCO-Beirut; Dr. Ghada Gholam, UNESCO-Cairo. The effort of ESD Focal Points was very important in finalizing the document. The UN DESED Secretariat at UNESCO HQ (ED/UNP/DESD) had provided technical contributions and assistance in preparing the Framework and availability of reference materials on ESD.

The United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office (UNEP/RO) in Bahrain and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) in Aleppo, had contributed to the preparation of the Framework and provided technical contributions on areas of cooperation related to UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development initiatives and projects at both international and regional levels.

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1. Background and General Context

• Introduction

The Second Earth Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 adopted the concept of “Sustainable Development” as a title and objective in order to achieve concrete social and economic progress in all states and regions of the world. Particularly, to deal with issues related to poverty reduction, unemployment, natural resources, waste and environment. This Summit was a follow-up to the first Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992.

The above-mentioned Summits constituted the starting point of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development –DESD (2005-2014) adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 2002, resolution 57/254. This resolution designated UNESCO as the lead and executive agency of the Decade Framework, since the Decade’s activities focus on providing learning and education opportunities to all groups of society, as a main and real entry point to sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

• Concept of Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an educational vision that seeks to find balance between human and economic welfare, cultural traditions and the sustainability of natural and environmental resources, in order to ensure a better life for both individuals and society at present and, for future generations as well. The implementation of ESD principles requires the adoption of several educational approaches with multi purposes and teaching methods, to ensure lifelong moral learning to all social groups and areas, promote the dignity of human needs, which is in line with sustainable and balanced use of natural resources and the preservation of these resources, for the sake of humanity at present and in the future, and nurtures the sense of solidarity at national, regional and international levels.

Further information on the UN DESD (2005-2014) is available in the annexes of the report and a set of websites such as:

www.unesco.org/education/desd

www.unescobkk.org/esd

www.unesco.org/beirut

In the Arab region, experts and specialists concerned with education and training adopted, during the initial launching of the Decade activities (September 2005) at both regional and national levels, the following brief definition of education for sustainable development: “the acquisition and practice of knowledge, values and skills that ensure balance between the economic, social and environmental aspects of development, and the observance of both individuals and society development and progress in life”.

This definition was adopted at the Regional Workshop on Education and Training in Sustainable Development (Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, 19-21 September 2005).

The events organized within the Framework of the Decade are usually linked to EFA goals (Dakar, 2000), Millennium Development Goals-MDGs (New York, 2000), and the UN Literacy Decade (2003-2012). Annex (1) highlights the goals of these three initiatives.

Since the decade is the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), UNESCO Offices in the Arab Region are coordinating their efforts with those of UNESCO National Commissions and Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Labor, Agriculture, Water and Environment, as well as with governmental institutions and civil society institutions concerned with joint action programmes implemented within the framework of strategies supporting the achievement of the Decade's objectives.

The Regional Guiding Framework of Education for Sustainable Education in the Arab Region (2005-2014) provides a general and reference vision of the activities that could be implemented by any of the partners such as education and training institutions, production and services, international and regional organizations, civil society and NGOs, within the framework of the DESD. The Framework highlighted the role of partners and beneficiaries in the implementation of joint activities related to society, life and work within the UN DESD. Annex (3) in the Arabic text provides details description of the expected role of partners in the region.

- **The Vision**

The vision of ESD in the Arab region is in line with the UN DESD global orientations and guidelines, including the promotion of national, regional and international cooperation and the achievement of justice and equality in areas closely related to society and life. The vision of the Regional Framework as regards sustainable development can be summarized as follows: arrange for individuals and communities to benefit from educational and training opportunities, which focus on knowledge, values and sustainable development behaviors, and to achieve a concrete progress in the social, economic and environmental aspects related to the objectives of the UN DESD (2005-2014), or any other relevant joint plan of action at the international, regional and national levels (UNESCO-Paris, 2005).

- **The Objectives**

The UN DESD aims at using the education and learning process to achieve sustainable development and requires the establishment of educational, scientific and cultural policies and plans in order to ensure human welfare and environmental balance. Mainly, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals-MDGs (eight goals), including poverty reduction, gender parity and sustainable development in the fields of agriculture, water, environment and biodiversity. The Regional Guiding Framework of Education for

Sustainable Development in the Arab region aims at achieving a series of objectives related to the UN DESD activities as follows:

1. Highlight the major role played by educational and learning programmes in the joint actions towards the achievement of sustainable development;
2. Facilitate linkage, networking, and exchange/interaction between partners concerned with education for sustainable development;
3. Provide and enhance a consolidated vision on sustainable development, and promote transformation to such vision, through new and diversified teaching/learning methods, and raise of public awareness on the importance of this vision;
4. Improve the quality of teaching and learning in the field of education for sustainable development;
5. Prepare and develop strategies (at the national and regional levels), to enhance capacities in the field of education for sustainable development.

Education for sustainable development provides the society (citizens and students) with a new learning incentive in a way that they become capable of developing and applying alternative visions to achieve a sustainable future, and to work together towards the achievement of these visions in certain fields (themes), as follows:

- Improve and develop education and training programmes, which target the achievement of sustainable development;
- Re-orient active teaching and learning approaches, aiming at achieving sustainable development at all educational and training levels : basic education, secondary and technical education, higher education, and continuing education(lifelong learning);
- Ensure and raise general understanding and awareness on sustainability among all groups of society; and
- Provide appropriate educational and training opportunities to all groups of society on ESD.

2. UNESCO's Role in the Achievement of the DESD Objectives

UNESCO plays several roles in the field of education for sustainable development, through its mission as a UN agency specialized in education, science, culture, communication and information and human and social sciences.

The International Community entrusted UNESCO with the coordination and leadership (at both international and regional levels) of the UN DESD activities, according to UN resolution 57/254 of 2002. UNESCO's tasks in the field of ESD/DESD include the following:

1. Accelerate the process of educational development and reform and coordinate the activities of the numerous stakeholders aimed at implementing education for sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels;
2. Promote the Decade's activities in coordination with Member States and concerned organizations and authorities; and
3. Establish appropriate (short and medium term) plans of action to achieve sustainable development.

3. Challenges Facing the Arab Region in Education for Sustainable Development

UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States-Beirut designed during the period 2006-2007, in cooperation with a small group of experts and specialists in the Arab Region, a questionnaire to explore Member States opinion regarding priorities and mechanisms to be adopted in order to achieve ESD/DESD objectives in the Arab region.

After the discussion and adoption of the draft questionnaires/forms, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States- Beirut distributed these questionnaires/forms to the National Commissions for UNESCO in the Arab region (Summer 2007), to ensure its completion by ministries of education and higher education, universities, research and development centers, as well as other partners concerned with sustainable development, in order to identify national and regional plans of action, along with priorities and implementation requirements aimed at achieving the ESD/DESD objectives. The communications with the National Commissions for UNESCO asked for nominating a National Focal Point for ESD/DESD in each country, and the possibility of formulating a National Team for ESD as soon as possible.

Fourteen (14) Arab countries completed the ESD/DESD questionnaires/forms and nominated a National Focal Point (Coordinator). The Focal Point will ensure coordination and exchange of experiences among institutions on ESD/DESD, at the national and regional levels. Annex (5) provides the ESD Focal Points contacts in the region, while Annex (6) provides the contacts for UNESCO Field Offices in the Arab region and the concerned programme specialists.

The analysis of questionnaires/forms allowed the identification of challenges that are facing sustainable development in the Arab region, and that are consequently generating challenges to the achievement of education for sustainable development. Therefore, it is the mission of sustainable development to assist in dealing with these challenges. Challenges facing sustainable development in the Arab region as stated in the questionnaires/forms can be classified as follows:

A. Challenges at the Economic Dimension:

- Poverty, unemployment and brain drain (they represent the biggest challenge at the three levels);
- Role of women in the workplace and in the production sector (in addition to challenges at the social level);
- Desertification, agriculture and water scarcity (in addition to challenges at the environment level);
- Scarcity of resources in general and the need to develop these resources and to rationalize their use (common challenge at the three levels).

B. Challenges at the Social Dimension:

- Political, security and demographic stability and sustainability of development efforts (with an impact at the three levels)

- Weakness of the role played by youth in social life (with an economic impact);
- Weakness of women's participation in social life (with an economic impact);
- Need to develop management and organizational patterns and methods in private and public sectors (with an economic impact);
- Lack of health awareness especially as regards infectious and communicable diseases such as AIDS.

C. Challenges at the Environment Dimension:

- Lack of environmental awareness, lack of environmental conservation and environmental depletion in a number of cases (with an economic impact);
- Increase of environmental pollution rates in all its forms;
- Existence of biodiversity requiring the establishment of multiple systems to preserve it;
- Outbreak of several resources unfair consumption patterns.

It is normal that the above challenges determine the most appropriate course for ESD according to the nature of the challenges faced by every country or community within the country. The study of the challenges facing sustainable development in each community apart represents, therefore, the basis for the definition of challenges facing this community and allows to draw up the objectives and work method to be adopted in order to achieve sustainable development in this community and to follow-up its implementation and assessment. This is done in all Arab countries with the knowledge of the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and of UNESCO National Commissions in cooperation with all concerned partners. UNESCO Offices in the Arab Region and UNESCO Headquarters in Paris support these efforts and assist in the transfer and exchange of expertise between Arab States. However, it is only normal that each country has its own challenges.

Education systems in the Arab Region are facing a number of common challenges that are negatively influencing their capacity to achieve the desired success. Among these challenges are the following:

- The failure to reach the required rates in order to achieve basic education and EFA goals;
- The failure to provide the necessary resources for education development plans and, more particularly, human resources necessary for the implementation of these plans;
- The irrelevance of methods used for the preparation, production and provision of appropriate educational materials (brochures, documents, activities, scientific research and studies) based on the values as well as on the cultural and cognitive wealth of which Arab societies are proud.

At the same time, ESD/DESD in the Arab region is facing specific challenges that can be summarized as follows:

- The understanding by all parties concerned with education of *the wide concept of education for sustainable development* and of its nature that is cross-cutting with a number of other themes and initiatives, constitutes one major challenge as it is the

- ***The complex nature of education for sustainable development*** represents a great challenge to its integration in school materials. This complex nature makes ESD/DESD overlap with all other educational materials and activities;
- The consideration of the Arab States' values and traditions when planning and implementing ESD constitutes another challenge due to the importance of these ***values and traditions*** (such as the respect of the environment in all its components, rational consumption and social cooperation and cohesion) for the populations of the Region. However, these values and traditions are not used enough in the preparation of ESD curricula and teaching materials;
- The fact that many Arab countries have recently finished completing the development of their policies, programmes and practices in the education sector also constitutes one major challenge for ESD/DESD, since it is difficult for citizens to accept the idea of amending these policies after starting their implementation.
- The issue of ***regional and sub-regional cooperation*** may also constitute one major challenge for ESD due to the lack of previous experience in this field in the Arab Region. It is hoped, at this level, that participating international organizations and bodies will assist in the enhancement of such cooperation;
- The provision of the ***necessary funding*** and training and the promotion of the principle of equal partnership remain among the challenges facing some Arab countries;
- Wars and conflicts still constitute a burden on some countries of the Region thus constituting a challenge not only for ESD but also for development itself and for the sustainability of large segments of human beings.

4. Basis of the Regional Framework for the Arab Region

The Regional Guiding Framework of Education for Sustainable Development is developed according to a set of bases related to the concept of sustainable development in the region, and the approaches to achieve goals of ESD/DESD:

1. Efforts focus on the achievement of ***a quantum leap*** aimed at triggering change in the behavior and orientations of individuals – through formal education and continuous non-formal education – with the participation of all members of society as well as of all public and grassroots institutions;
2. Priority is given to the harmonious and integrated orientation of efforts towards education for sustainable development ***through a holistic approach not as a additional component***;
3. ***Education for sustainable development efforts are complementary to the existing initiatives*** – such as Education for All, the Literacy Decade, the MDGs, etc...- using the holistic method in order to achieve the objectives of each one of these initiatives;
4. By recognizing that it is impossible for one unique party to achieve the ESD objectives by itself, the Framework of Action is based on the hypothesis that ***all social categories and institutions should play a role*** in the achievement of the

- objectives of the Decade in an integrated and harmonious way and, in cooperation with other partners;
5. Efforts aimed at achieving the objectives of the Decade put both gender on an equal footing, as well as racial and religious groups, rural and urban areas, and social and economic levels, etc...
 6. Efforts take advantage of *Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)* in reaching all social categories and in achieving the objectives of the Decade;
 7. *Public and grassroots bodies cooperate to provide the necessary funding* to achieve this quantum leap in learning and the International Community and organizations contribute whenever needed.

5. Role of Partners and Beneficiaries

The partners defined in the questionnaire did not vary from those already selected in the Global General Framework for the UN DESD activities (UNESCO–Paris, 2005). However, the priority of each of these activities varied since governmental institutions and international organizations have acquired greater importance knowing that the authorities have completed the questionnaire keep considering the civil society, the private sector and the media as newcomers to the scene of education for sustainable development in the Arab region. Furthermore, the questionnaires did not reflect the importance expected to be given to the distinction between what suits the different communities within the same country (such as urban and rural areas, coastal areas, deserts and mountain regions – low income countries, high-income countries, countries that have made real progress in industry and those that still basically depend on agriculture and raw materials, tourist and services areas). This constitutes in its turn an indicator of the centrality of planning while ESD calls for taking the variables of the different communities and areas within the same country into consideration. Roles are distributed among five main partners as follows:

1. Governments, and public/private educational institutions;
2. International and regional organizations;
3. Civil society and its institutions;
4. Business and labor institutions; and
5. Media (television, press, radio and broadcasting).

Annex (3) of the Arabic text has more description of the ESD/DESD partners suggested roles.

6. Timetable for the Implementation of Activities

Extensive discussions with the group of experts and specialists who have taken part in the workshops of Alexandria and Damascus (May and July 2007) had resulted in a proposal suggesting the classification of UN DESD activities and events in the Arab region into three phases (timetable), as follows:

- **Phase One (2005-2007): Launching of Activities and Planning**

It was necessary that UNESCO and its field offices in the Arab States play a major role, during Phase One, in raising awareness on the DESD and in developing Arab capacities and expertise so as to guide and orientate Arab countries efforts towards achieving the Decade's objectives. A number of regional activities and training sessions have been organized during this period in addition to the elaboration and dissemination of national and sub-regional studies.

In an attempt to exchange experiences between Arab countries and to reach consensus on the concept, content and efforts of ESD in the Arab States, five regional workshops have been organized as follows:

1. Regional Workshop on the Role of Education and Training in Sustainable Development (Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, 19-21 September 2005);
2. Regional Workshop to launch the DESD's activities in the Arab Region (Beirut, 22-23 September 2005);
3. Regional Workshop on the Role of Agricultural Education and Training (Salt, Jordan, 5-7 February 2007);
4. Regional Workshop on the Promotion of Teachers' Skills in Sustainable Development (Alexandria, Egypt, 7-9 May 2007);
5. Regional Workshop on Education, Environment and Water (Damascus, Syria, 14-16 July 2007).

In addition to the role they played in the development of Arab capacities and expertise, the above mentioned workshops have served as experts meetings since participants who were mostly experts expressed their countries actual needs and priorities. Their opinions were reflected in the design of the questionnaire that has been distributed to the Arab countries as well as in the preparation of the Regional Guiding Framework.

UNESCO Field Offices in the Arab region contributed to the implementation of the DESD by targeting teachers who constitute the cornerstone of developing the education and learning processes, through a series of training sessions focusing on sciences, environment and social sciences according to UNESCO programmes in the Arab region for 2006-2007. A reference guide for education for sustainable development has been prepared and some important UNESCO references have been translated to Arabic such as the document entitled: "Leading principles and recommendations for the re-orientation of teachers training towards sustainability" (UNESCO-Cairo, 2007).

National and sub-regional case studies on the role of education and training in sustainable development (published in issue no.3 of UNEVOC series – Beirut, January 2006), as well as case studies on the role of technical and vocational education in sustainable development (published in issue no.7 of UNEVOC series- Beirut, June 2007) have also been undertaken.

UNESCO Regional Office-Beirut considered the necessity that the Arab countries provide partnership and contributions in the planning and coordination of the DESD activities in the region, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO (Programme and Budget).

To this effect, a questionnaire has been prepared and distributed to the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, UNESCO National Commissions, universities and research centers, as well as to other partners in the Arab countries.

- **Phase Two (2008-2011): Commitment and Construction**

This phase concerns the building of activities and programmes for education for sustainable development in the Arab Region as well as in other regions of the world as planned in Phase One. The questionnaires/forms that has been completed by fourteen countries representing the four clusters/sub-regions (Mashreq, Red Sea, Gulf, and Maghreb) had detailed proposals for the second phase (2008-2011). Proposals that have been collected and classified under four themes which, in fact, constitute priority areas for the DESD activities at UNESCO's level, are:

- a. Improve and develop educational and training programmes addressing sustainable development;
- b. Re-orientate active learning and educational approaches aiming at sustainable development;
- c. Ensure general understanding and awareness on development and sustainability for all;
- d. Provide appropriate educational and training opportunities to the different groups of society.

In view of the importance of the proposals stated for this phase to support Member States of the region in launching the implementation process of the ESD/DESD activities, and considering that "Commitment and Construction Phase" has actually started, the Regional Guiding Framework has the next section (no. 7) on the proposed priorities for Arab region.

- **Phase Three (2012-2014): Support, Follow-up and Evaluation**

The answers provided by educational institutions in the Arab Region to the questionnaire included a limited number of proposed projects and programmes of action for Phase Three. The following series of projects and programmes matching those stated in Phase Two were defined as follows:

- Analyze the outcomes of programmes and projects to be implemented during Phase Two in order to assess the latter and deduct learned lessons to be taken into account when planning other activities;
- Establish and apply defined criteria for the assessment and follow-up of programmes targeting ESD;
- Assess the efficiency of training targeting the Decade's activities and evaluate the extent to which such training fits the training needs that have been defined at the beginning of the Decade; and focus on remedial programmes to fill this gap;
- Plan the sustainability of the work of newly established networks and media participating in raising awareness on the environment among different social categories;
- Enhance the capacities of individuals and educational and training institutions in the field of assessment and follow-up;

- Universalize the outcomes of the assessment of programmes and projects undertaken in the Arab Region;
- Establish programmes for the post- DESD phase and define their financing resources to preserve achievements that have been made during the Decade and ensure their integrity with programmes implemented by ministries, bodies and institutions concerned with education and training in the Arab countries.

7. Suggested Priorities for the Arab Region: Phase Two-Commitment and Construction

The questionnaire that has been completed by most Arab States (14 States) has defined a number of priorities related to the Arab Region. These priorities have been gathered and arranged in a matrix using the classification described in tables (1), which include:

- Four main areas of activities for the DESD (horizontal classification: a, b, c, d);
- Authorities and departments concerned with the implementation of activities, according to administrative divisions in the Arab region (vertical classification).

The classification facilitates the implementation process and technical contributions of the priorities, according to administration divisions between ministries and other partners in the implementation process, such as government institutions, private sector, civil society and NGOs. Annex (4) of the Arabic text included more information on such priorities.

Table (1): Suggested Priorities for the Arab Region – Phase Two (2008-2011)

Areas of activities Parties concerned with implementation	a. Programmes and majors	b. Learning systems	c. Awareness	c- Learning opportunities
Buildings and Expansions	- Kindergarten -Appropriate school building	- Development of an educational resources network	- Design and functioning of the school building	- Common centers for both sectors
Programmes and majors	-Environment and natural resources - Majors in higher education -Academic qualifications in this field	-Technical and vocational education and training programmes	-National and regional institutions - Monitoring and assessment systems	- Training of leaders and teachers trainers - Non-formal education -Institutions capacities
Curricula and learning materials	-Sustainable development dimensions -Essential and life skills -Concepts of rationalization	-Extra-curricular activities - Teaching/learning methods -Foreign languages	-Camps and excursions - Environmental projects	- Measurement of training impact
Research, studies and reports	-Centers to support researchers -Adoption of innovative outcomes -Level improvement	-Academically qualifying experiences -New trends	-Research competitions -Adoption of innovative initiatives	- Alternative opportunities
Criteria and indicators	-Establishment of criteria and indicators	- E-learning and distance education indicators	- Indicators of efficiency	-Quality indicators -Academic accreditation
Information and Communication Technology	- Innovative thinking development	- Educational management - E-learning	- Interactive programmes - Media as a medium - Seminars and communication	- E-learning and distance education

Partnership	-Public and private education - Education and society	-Societal participation - Specialized professional associations	-Community culture and citizenship - Openness on society - Linkage networks	- Governmental and non-governmental sectors
International and regional cooperation	- Success stories and lessons learned - Joint activities	- Exchange of experiences - Experts meetings	- Regional camps - Field visits	- Peer review - Exchange of experiences

8. National, Regional and International Cooperation

UNESCO Offices in the Arab Region and UNESCO National Commissions nominated national coordinators for the Decade's activities, within the framework of a biennial action plan for the period 2006-2007. It is expected that a national team be established to contribute to the achievement of the Decade's objectives and programmes of action along with educational institutions. At the regional level, UNESCO will seek to involve the relevant international organizations in development programmes and projects. It will also seek to establish an inter-agency regional consultative team to ensure communication and coordination of joint programmes of action, namely initiatives focusing on the achievement of the MDGs and the EFA goals. The UN Secretariat of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development provided a series of reports on the work mechanism of the International Consultative Team concerned with the Decade's activities.

Education for sustainable development is characterized by the width of its concept and content and by the fact that it exceeds knowledge to target behaviors. It has hence become impossible that a party, institution or ministry succeeds to achieve the DESD objectives by itself.

The achievement of these objectives will definitely require cooperation between all concerned parties in the country, such as cooperation between the ministries of environment, agriculture and industry, employers organizations, employees associations, civil society and other parties on the one hand, and educational and training institutions, on the other, in order to coordinate activities that positively contribute to the achievement of the Decade's objectives.

At the national level, it is necessary to select a coordination body that would be entrusted with the management of the Decade. The working groups formula to which take part representatives of concerned ministries and bodies with a technical secretariat at the UNESCO National Commission constitutes one of the most appropriate formulas that have been suggested during regional meetings and workshops. This kind of formula provides an opportunity to coordinate activities aimed at achieving the Decade's objectives. It also provides the necessary efforts and funding resources and can be easily

monitored to reflect a better image of the efforts made at the level of each State as well as of the Arab efforts as a whole at the international level.

It is hoped that the proposed meeting of UN Organizations concerned with sustainable development in the Arab Region produces a matrix that identifies the areas and activities that each organization intends to focus on. Such a matrix constitutes a guide for Arab States in identifying their activities and exchanging their expertise during the Decade's different phases. The role of Arab Organizations analogous to International Organizations remains important and essential to the coordination of efforts, mobilization of resources and exchange of expertise and of appropriate teaching materials.

In addition to the reduced team including experts from a number of Arab countries, the building of a cooperation mechanism at the Arab Region's level represents a necessary step towards the achievement of the necessary coordination between Arab States within the framework of regional and international joint programmes of action.

At the international level, UNESCO's efforts as an organization responsible for coordination and the efforts of the proposed consultative committee gathering representatives of UN Organizations taking part in the implementation of the Decade's objectives constitute the basis of international cooperation in this field.

The rotation system adopted at the committee's presidency level among participating organizations contributes to the sustainability of efforts within the framework of the Decade's activities. It is hoped that the International Community and donors contribute to the promotion of efforts in the Arab Region, in addition to the role played by cooperation and coordination between geographical areas and UNESCO regional offices in this field.

9. Financing

In many cases, available funds represent the borderline between the reality of the planning process and the opportunities of transforming the latter into reality. In light of the limited available funds and the multiple challenges facing the States of the Region (at the political, economic and social levels), in addition to the fact that the major part of the budgets allocated to education fall under the article related to salaries, the financing issue still constitutes the main obstacle to the achievement of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in the Arab Region. Furthermore, in light of a real and realistic understanding of the fact that the national role as regards the implementation of the Decade is the main and most effective role that only national authorities can play, all Arab States are required to search for the necessary financing resources in a realistic way either from their own governmental resources or from resources that can be provided by partners from civil society and the business sector. The good and rational use of these resources constitutes an essential requirement due to their limitation.

UN Agencies' commitment to the Decade and to its objectives is an incentive for States and institutions to develop joint programmes of action. These Agencies as well as their regional offices in the Arab Region have action plans and programmes aimed at

supporting and achieving the objectives of the Decade by supporting the efforts made by States and institutions in terms of planning, implementation, follow-up and assessment. Solidarity among the States of the Region through specialized development funds and development banks constitutes an additional means of providing the necessary funding, especially if investment is orientated towards the increase of revenues and towards ensuring that Arab States benefit, in their majority, from the outcome of national, regional and international efforts in the field of ESD.

10. Monitoring, Evaluation and Follow-up

UNESCO General Conference reaffirmed in its 34th session (Paris, November 2007) the need to give the monitoring, assessment and follow-up process the necessary attention in the DESD's action plans and programmes after the discussion of the preliminary report that has been submitted to Member States on the achievements made in the States and regions of the world, during Phase One (2005-2007). The phases to be adopted by UNESCO for the development of a comprehensive and detailed report on the achievement and implementation stages in all States and regions of the world as proposed by the preliminary reports have been approved. The Secretariat of the DESD at UNESCO has defined the proposed timetable for the preparation and monitoring and assessment reports as well as the topics of each report, in cooperation with the MEEG. International reports will hence cover the following areas:

- First report: structure and content in 2009
- Second report: learning mechanisms and initiatives in 2011.
- Third report: outcomes and impact in 2015.

It is necessary to bear in mind that monitoring and assessment processes are only tools used to identify the extent to which these programmes and activities are relevant to the fixed objectives. The linkage between monitoring and assessment as an essential source of feedback and the planning process related to the implementation of the DESD is of utmost necessity. The participation of all partners in the monitoring, assessment and follow-up process constitutes one of the recognized bases in this particular case since it is recognized that no party is capable of achieving the ESD objectives all by itself. The achievement of these objectives requires the designation of the party responsible for monitoring, assessment and follow-up among participating parties and the establishment of appropriate monitoring, assessment and follow-up mechanisms that take the special characteristics of each country as well as the diversity of cultures and methods into account.

It is normal that the monitoring, assessment and follow-up system be based on a series of indicators which are continuously subject to assessment. Indicators are divided according to the different levels at which the ESD implementation requirements are being monitored (such as pre-school education, basic education, secondary education, technical education, higher education, teachers training, continuous education). Some indicators

are generally qualitative and are hence assessed through the description of the achievements made in addition to the determination of the progress made at the level of these indicators (preparation hasn't started yet, work is in progress, drafts have been prepared, work has been completed), while there are quantitative indicators that are determined in figures and ratios. Considering the diversity of partners concerned with education for sustainable development, it would be better if each partner establishes his own indicators. It is also normal that each country forges its own appropriate indicators. On the other hand, the working group has undertaken expanded discussions on similar activities in a number of other geographical areas (namely Asia and the Pacific) and on the compatibility of these activities with the specifications and requirements of the Arab Region, in order to facilitate both the work process and the elaboration of national reports that would be gathered in sub-regional and regional reports. The discussions have hence resulted in the selection of seven monitoring, assessment and follow-up indicators in the Arab Region that are:

1. Existence of a policy/strategy and a framework of action to achieve the ESD objectives at several levels, the definition of parties and mechanisms for the coordination of these efforts, the determination of the role to be played by each of the partners, the definition of methods to be adopted to achieve these objectives in non-formal education and, the definition of the necessary governmental financing resources as well as those provided by other partners;
2. Existence of a comprehensive education quality management system with a special part for education for sustainable development, or of a quality management system specialized only in education for sustainable development and including a quality control system for teachers training and performance assessment, linkage of teachers through networks and provision of appropriate educational materials;
3. Application by the school/learning institution of ESD as an integrated unit where each individual assumes his responsibilities in harmony with the roles played by other individuals;
4. Implementation by the school/learning institution of participatory processes in coordination with all partners;
5. Adoption of agreed upon policies and tools aimed at measuring changes at the level of individuals' knowledge and behaviors as a result of ESD;
6. Application and dissemination of studies and researches on the implementation of ESD and on how to increase the latter's efficiency and measure its effect to be used in the planning and implementation process;
7. Establishment of a national (local) partners' network to ensure positive and active communication with regional and international networks.

Each State of the Region shall, therefore, be responsible for studying each and every indicator in details. It shall also be responsible for modifying the selected indicators according to its own requirements and specifications and to benefit from these indicators to guide its ESD activities, on the hand and, to monitor and assess performance, on the other. These indicators constitute the theme of periodic and non-periodic reports that are prepared by the countries of the Region. Methods and tools for the collection of the data necessary to test these indicators as well as the establishment, trial and dissemination of

these mechanisms are defined in light of national indicators. It is preferable, in this context, to integrate ESD (quantitative and qualitative) indicators into the on-going monitoring and assessment process of EFA and the Literacy Decade.

UNESCO has also taken the necessary measures to establish the first report and a questionnaire aimed at collecting the data and information necessary for the establishment of the report has been prepared and distributed to Member States. The questionnaire is to be completed and returned to UNESCO Regional Bureau – Beirut within a two-month period in order to be analyzed before submitting a regional report that would facilitate the collection and comparison process to the DESD Secretariat at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

UNESCO and its (regional, cluster and national) offices in the Arab Region will seek, in cooperation with partners and beneficiaries (governments, organizations, civil society institutions and the private sector), to support national, sub-regional and regional efforts aimed either at selecting the indicators or at establishing mechanisms for data collection and analysis. They will also support efforts aimed at establishing assessment programmes and measures, reviewing activities and plans of action and preparing the necessary follow-up and assessment reports. UNESCO Offices in the Region will as well seek to ensure maximum integration and coordination between the efforts of UN Agencies, international organizations, technical cooperation bodies and non-governmental organizations and to support cooperation and exchange of experiences among Arab States themselves and between the latter and other regions of the world.

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Annexes

- (1) EFA Goals, MDGs and UN Literacy Decade
- (2) Supporting Strategies for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)
- (3) The Role of Partners in ESD Framework for the Arab Region*
- (4) Priority Areas for the Arab Region (Phase Two: Commitment and Construction)*
- (5) ESD National Focal Points in the Arab Region
- (6) UNESCO Field Offices in the Arab Region and DESD Coordination Unit at UNESCO HQs

* Annexes 3 and 4 are available in Arabic only.

Annex (1)

A. The EFA Goals (Dakar, April 2000)

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children ;
2. Ensuring that, by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in different circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
3. Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
4. Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults ;
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
6. Improving every aspect of the quality of education, and ensuring their excellence so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeric and essential life skills.

B. The Millennium Development Goals (New York, September 2000)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger;
2. Achieve universal primary education;
3. Promote gender equality and empower women;
4. Reduce child mortality;
5. Improve maternal health;
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases;
7. Ensure environmental sustainability;
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

D. The UN Decade on Literacy (2003-2012)

The United Nations adopted this UN Decade as part of the global effort to achieve EFA goals and plans of action at the international, regional and national levels.

For more information on the Decade is available on the website:

<http://www.unesco.org/uil>

Annex (2)

Supporting Strategies for UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

- 1- Vision-Building and Advocacy;
- 2- Consultation and Ownership;
- 3- Partnership and networks;
- 4- Capacity-Building and Training;
- 5- Research and Innovation
- 6- Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs);
- 7- Monitoring and Evaluation.

Source: UNESCO-Paris (2005). Global Framework for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

Annex (5)

ESD Focal Points in the Arab Region for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014)

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Annex (6)

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