

Summary of Working Group I on Education

Working Group I discussed the issues on education for sustainable development, including environmental education in both developed and developing countries and the possible roles of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in promoting sustainable development. Various innovative initiatives in selected countries, both in developed and developing countries were introduced. Activities for developing teaching materials, jointly promoted by developed and developing countries were presented.

Major points emphasized during the discussions included:

- (i) Sustainable development is important both in developed and developing countries. Fundamentally it is a challenge to reorient economic theory and practices in line with goals of sustainable development. Some countries may start from education for environmentally sustainable development, and gradually expand it to a broader scope.
- (ii) Sustainable development can only be achieved through formal and non-formal education at all levels and in all sectors of society to facilitate transformation of society toward sustainable development. Sustainability standards require (i) transparency and accountability, (ii) participation, (iii) equity and (iv) efficiency and must address to economic, social and ecological sustainability. Development of ecological understanding is not simply another subject to be learned but should be integrated in all subjects in all forms of education in a transparent manner. Continuing education for all people opens up new opportunities, initiatives and professions to attain sustainability.
- (iii) Education for sustainable development may be seen as stimulating learning at the individual level; within organizations to transform their ways of working to be consistent with sustainable development; and to stimulate social learning to bring about the necessary conditions for society to move towards more sustainable development.
- (iv) DESD is an effective vehicle to promote education for sustainable development. Major objectives of DESD should be to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promotion of Agenda21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) etc. In this connection, initiatives by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and relevant partners, including those in local governments and NGO community were appreciated.
- (v) Linkage with the on-going international educational initiatives, such as Education for All (EFA) and the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) was clearly recognized. Education for sustainable development would reinforce these initiatives by reorienting current systems and improving the quality of education.
- (vi) The initiative of the Japan Council on the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development could be a good reference for promoting DESD in respective countries, and therefore be disseminated widely all over the world.

- (vii) Science and technology should play a key role to reorient educational curricula for sustainability. Higher education should play an active role especially in training and re-training of school teachers. Activities of the Ubuntu Declaration group for these purposes were appreciated.
- (viii) New ethics need to be established on the basis of the guiding principles of the Earth Charter to attain sustainable development, including changing lifestyle.
- (ix) Education for sustainable development should be promoted, taking into account the diversities in social, cultural and environmental conditions at local and national levels. There is no universal, standardized approach that can be applied to all.
- (x) Development of teaching materials and modules may be useful to provide a common platform in both developed and developing countries.
- (xi) There is a need for greening educational systems in two ways: greening of teacher training and educational curricula on the one hand, and greening of the entire operation of educational institutions on the other. In this connection, the initiative of the Global higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP) to develop toolkit or treasure books was welcomed.
- (xii) A variety of partnerships are required to involve as many stakeholders as possible for the success of formulating and implementing DESD.
- (xiii) Visions for sustainable development should be clearly articulated by respective partners within the parameters of their own aims, concerns and programs.
- (xiv) Involvement of local administration and community should be emphasized. Experiential education and process-oriented education based on actual community needs and requirements were proven quite useful for school children.
- (xv) A representative of the ECO Youth Conference informed the Working Group of the Action Plan adopted at the ECO Youth Conference and urged the Working Group to consider recommendations.

Recommendations:

The Working Group made the following specific recommendations, taking into account the above discussions.

- (i) All countries should develop their respective plans and programs on education for sustainable development, allowing diversity at the local community level. In this respect, economic, social and ecological sustainability should be addressed at all levels.
- (ii) Reorientation and transformation of education for sustainable development would require strong political leadership and effective formulation and implementation of essential policy reform.
- (iii) Each country, developing or developed, is requested to consider establishing high-level multistakeholder national mechanisms to stimulate individual activities by various stakeholders, facilitate their dissemination and monitor the overall progress of DESD at the national and international levels.
- (iv) More investment needs to be considered for education for strengthening institutional capacity to promote sustainable development, especially at the local

- level, taking into account the on-going decentralization processes in various countries. Donor organizations are urged to consider increasing ODA for education activities across all segments of population.
- (v) The scientific and technological community should be urged to provide concrete contributions by identifying priority areas and necessary materials for reorienting educational curricula in all forms of education.
 - (vi) Higher education organizations should play the key role on training and re-training of school teachers to improve teaching capability on sustainability. They should also consider working more closely with other partners such as primary and secondary schools and also community-based organizations.
 - (vii) The business sector should be encouraged to intensify its effort to contribute to education for sustainable development, in particular, community-based education activities in terms of both technical and financial cooperation including personnel exchange.
 - (viii) An important role should be given to media, science musea (zoos, botanic gardens) of all kinds etc to provide the public at large with up-to-date information and create learning opportunities to promote sustainable development.
 - (ix) Active participation of NGOs and civil society with all its innovative competence, networks and associations, should be facilitated in the activities for DESD, particularly in those countries where their role is not fully recognized.
 - (x) Partners to promote DESD should consider establishment of an ethical framework for sustainable development. The guiding principles in the Earth Charter could be reflected in materials used in all learning efforts to promote sustainable development, including those in the school systems.
 - (xi) Such learning materials should cover both local and global issues, and reflect the critical importance of local culture, values and conditions. Task Forces may be established at the national and international levels to develop modules, text books, reorient curricula and teacher training and retraining, and also to disseminate good practices. The World Heritage sites could provide a good basis to develop such materials.
 - (xii) Locally-based, integrated, holistic approaches should be encouraged. A few demonstration projects should be undertaken to promote regional (as parts of a country) centers of excellence for education for sustainable development, with the participation of local institutions of primary, secondary and tertiary education, non-formal education, research institutions, museums and local governments etc. deemed as appropriate. This might be considered as a first step to create global learning space through networking of regional centers of excellence.
 - (xiii) UNESCO and its partner organizations should make their utmost efforts to mobilize as many partners as possible to contribute to the formulation and implementation of the International Implementation Scheme for DESD, particularly through extensive consultation processes. They should also facilitate the networking of partners who promote education for sustainable development.
 - (xiv) UNESCO should consider developing a concrete calendar on DESD to document activities of all partners, in particular in 2004-2005 to kick off the Decade.