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**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS
DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEME AND UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION
TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECADE**

**UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2005-2014)**

SUMMARY

In pursuance of 171 EX/Decision 6, this preliminary report was prepared to provide elements of UNESCO's contributions to the implementation of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005-2014). The United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/254 proclaimed the UNDESD, designated UNESCO as the lead agency and requested the Organization to prepare a draft International Implementation Scheme for the Decade, in consultation with the United Nations agencies, Member States, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders, clarifying relationships with existing educational processes, in particular the Dakar Framework for Action and the United Nations Literacy Decade. This document outlines the requested elements for developing a fully fledged UNESCO Action Plan for the Decade as requested by the Executive Board at its 171st session.

Decision required: No decision is required.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 57/254 (introduced by Japan and supported by 42 Member States) proclaiming the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) (2005-2014). UNESCO was designated as the lead agency and was requested to develop a draft International Implementation Scheme (IIS) for the Decade. As a result, UNESCO has a dual role to play: one as international coordinator and facilitator for the Decade, and the second as a substantive implementer of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). In fulfilment of the first role, UNESCO will lead the global process to reorient education in support of sustainable development in national policies and education systems. It will also endeavour to make the diverse actors in civil society, including the private sector and the media, aware of the importance of sustainable development. To this effect, UNESCO has developed a draft International Implementation Scheme (see document 172 EX/11) through an extensive consultation with partners. To fulfil its second role, as a substantive implementer of the Decade, UNESCO will develop a broad-based intersectoral action plan in line with the IIS. During the Decade, UNESCO will promote education as a basis for a more sustainable human society and will encourage the integration of sustainable development issues and practices, including local knowledge and culture, into education systems at all levels.

2. UNESCO's action plan, in conjunction with the DESD International Implementation Scheme, will guide the Organization's efforts and initiatives. The present document aims to outline how UNESCO will tackle its specific contribution to the Decade. Three interlinked areas are most commonly identified as central to sustainable development: society (including politics), environment and economy. But it is education, in all of its aspects and forms, which constitutes the foundation for all other strategies to promote the concept of sustainable development. It is education that plays the key role in building the human resource capacity that makes possible sustainable human development-building stable societies with economic structures that enable decent living conditions. As the coordinating body for DESD, UNESCO has painstakingly engaged all major players in the development of the IIS. At its core, the Decade's goal is that countries achieve sustainable development, that is, the social, economic and environmental capacity to maintain an intentional path of continuing development. Education, beginning with basic literacy and extending throughout life, is the foundation upon which sustainable development ultimately rests.

3. The overall goal of DESD is to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning in order to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable, economically viable and just society for all, a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. This translates into four objectives:

- to facilitate networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in ESD;
- to foster an increased quality of teaching and learning in education for sustainable development;
- to help countries to make progress towards and attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)(through ESD efforts);
- to provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

4. At UNESCO, Education for All (EFA) lies at the heart of the effort to achieve the DESD objectives. EFA focuses on getting people into organized learning while DESD addresses all levels and modalities of education, including quality media and corporate training programmes. All educational development efforts, beginning with planning and capacity-building, can only succeed through robust, diverse and multiple partnerships that respond to the articulated needs of the countries involved. The strategies developed by UNESCO and its DESD partners are aimed at linking quality education for all through national education plans and applied learning towards the ultimate goal of sustainable development in each country. The seven strategies for achieving the goals are: advocacy and vision-building; consultation and ownership; partnership and networks; capacity-building and training; research and innovation; information and communication technologies; and monitoring and evaluation.

5. Significant synergy and alignment among the MDG, EFA, United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and DESD partners are vital. While clearly having their distinctive special purposes, these processes acquire added strength when taken together, especially in the framework of the totality of United Nations efforts. MDGs provide clear development goals that can be measured, including education as a significant input and indicator. EFA focuses on ways of ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to have a quality education. UNLD concentrates on promoting literacy as the key tool for all types and levels of learning. And DESD promotes the societal goal of sustainable development, which results from excellent education programmes. (For detailed study of the linkages between the four global efforts in education, see UNESCO, *Working Together for Education. International Cooperation in Action*, 2005, and UNESCO, *UNESCO and Sustainable Development*, 2005.) By engaging in all four global commitments actively and simultaneously, and by cooperating closely, UNESCO and its partners will provide coherent support to countries that are moving, through better education, towards sustainable development.

II. ROLE OF UNESCO AS THE LEAD AGENCY FOR DESD

6. UNESCO's role as lead agency for the DESD will be fully in line with the Organization's functions as a laboratory of ideas, standard-setter, clearinghouse, capacity-builder and promoter of international cooperation. UNESCO will be proactive, and all of the parts of the Organization will work together in an intersectoral manner so that it plays the strong leadership and coordination role at international level as well as to ensure the success of the Decade. The Organization will use its DESD coordination role to:

- fully perform its strategic role with regard to ESD;
- catalyse new partnerships with the private sector, youth and media groups;
- encourage monitoring and evaluation;
- encourage a research agenda and serve as forum for relevant research on ESD;
- serve as forum for bringing together important stakeholders in the Decade, such as: leading representatives of key multinationals, faith-based institutions, youth associations, indigenous people, etc.;
- share good ESD practices;
- link Member States that have put in place ESD curricula, policies, research, etc., with those Member States that are requesting help; and
- convene flexible working groups on particular topics.

7. Many countries and organizations on their own initiative and in response to UNESCO's advocacy and leadership, have already launched national plans, curricular changes, indicator identification, national ESD committees, and advocacy campaigns. In this dynamic context, UNESCO's primary coordination activities in the forthcoming three years will include the following:

- strengthening the multilateral partnerships, inviting each organization to outline its specific contribution to the DESD;
- developing, sharing and using strategically a list of national and NGO focal points for the Decade;
- convening strategic meetings to engage key partnerships and actions, particularly with regard to research and innovation, the private sector, faith-based institutions, youth groups and NGOs;
- continuing the development and distribution of key "technical assistance packages" that include materials, sharing of lessons learned, advice, and linking countries with similar approaches and desired results with regard to the DESD;
- facilitating the development of monitoring mechanisms, based on national priorities and, to the extent possible, using existing structures;
- creating a leaders index, through the High-Level Panel and other mechanisms, as a source of advocacy and support in a range of substantive areas and contexts; and
- using the platform of the DESD to ensure greater global attention to UNESCO's other priorities, and vice versa.

8. The scope of DESD is extremely wide and far-reaching, touching every aspect of development. The efforts of the international community need to be well coordinated to encourage mutual cooperation and avoid duplication and overlaps. As envisaged in the IIS, UNESCO proposes to establish an Inter-Agency Committee on DESD, a multilateral forum with open-ended collaboration bringing international agencies together to:

- share programmes and plans in order to encourage mutual reinforcement and avoid duplication or overlap;
- harmonize approaches to ESD and sustainable development practices within each institution; and,
- provide a forum for agencies to integrate the insights and perspectives of other international actors into their ESD agendas.

9. In addition, this Committee will support UNESCO, the lead United Nations agency, in planning and promoting the Decade, mobilizing financial resources, coordinating multi-stakeholder implementation, and assessing and reporting (to UNESCO, the United Nations General Assembly, the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and other stakeholders and partners).

III. ROLE OF UNESCO COMMUNITIES

10. For nearly sixty years, UNESCO has worked to promote and improve education, in all of its forms and at all levels, throughout the world. Its vision of education encompasses economic, social, cultural, demographic and environmental issues. Predictably, UNESCO first demonstrated its concern for sustainable development in the Science Sector. Today, that goal is present in all UNESCO fields of competence – education, the social and human sciences, science, culture and communication – and in particular in the projects implemented by its field offices and institutes. One of UNESCO's essential comparative advantages is its capacity for intersectoral action in key areas for the benefit of Member States, and it is this intersectoral collaboration and coordination that will be brought to bear in planning and implementing UNESCO's own substantive contribution to the Decade.

11. During the Decade and beyond, all parts of UNESCO will work together. The country and the cluster offices will play proactive roles in promoting ESD and the Decade by initiating dialogue with the Member States, United Nations partners, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders at the country level to integrate elements of ESD into the education system and the national agenda of sustainable development. The regional bureaux will facilitate the development of regional strategies for the Decade, explore possibilities of organizing regional exchanges and sharing experiences on ESD, and provide technical and professional support to the cluster and national offices to assist the Member States. All Regional Bureaux have already initiated regional preparations for DESD, assisting in the facilitation, coordination and strengthening of regional ESD networks, partnerships and frameworks for action in order to enable new and existing stakeholders across all sectors to better coordinate their ESD activities and to generate programmes and initiatives that meaningfully contribute to the advancement of ESD. The UNESCO programme sectors are developing their short-, medium- and long-term plans for DESD. In addition, all sectors and bureaux at Headquarters will provide support and technical backstopping to the national, cluster and regional offices when necessary. The UNESCO institutes for education, statistics and sciences (particularly water) will play important roles in this process.

12. To provide overall coordination and facilitate the programmatic contribution of UNESCO, I have decided to set up an Intersectoral Working Group (IWG) on ESD. It will be chaired by ADG/ED. This Working Group is composed of representatives from all programme sectors at Director level, as well as DIR/BSP, DIR/BFC, and representatives from ERC and ODG. The directors of UNESCO institutes and the directors of the regional offices will also be invited to participate in the work of the intersectoral group by means of electronic communication. The Working Group will provide advice, monitor activities and ensure intersectoral coordination among Headquarters, regional bureaux, field offices and institutes. In promoting the Decade, it will ensure that ESD is embedded effectively in the programmes of UNESCO, keeping in mind the other organizational priorities, notably: EFA and UNLD. The Working Group will also ensure that DESD contributes to reinforcing the three core EFA initiatives – the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), the Teacher Training Initiative for sub-Saharan Africa and the Global Initiative on HIV/AIDS and Education (EDUCAIDS). In particular, the IWG will contribute to: (1) developing a fully fledged in-house action plan; (2) making recommendations to all UNESCO sectors, divisions and field offices to integrate the goals and objectives of DESD in their activities; (3) validating a monitoring and assessment framework; and (4) developing reporting mechanisms.

13. UNESCO National Commissions will be one of the key partners in the implementation of DESD at the national level. The National Commissions have many potential roles regarding the Decade, as actors, initiators and catalysts. They may help initiate the establishment of a national committee for the Decade (in some countries, such committees have already been established), and liaise with and be a member of the DESD national committee where it exists. National

Commissions will play a vital role in promoting DESD goals at national level and in ensuring the integration of ESD into national educational policies, strategies and plans. They will help implement initiatives related to the Decade, including training programmes, studies, the Participation Programme, public awareness campaigns and media outreach, as well as contribute to the mobilization of civil society by acting as facilitators/honest brokers. As a vital link between UNESCO programmes, national institutions, NGOs and civil society at large on various issues related to ESD, National Commissions will play advisory and advocacy roles, and provide a link or interface with governments, informing and influencing decision-makers, including ministers of education, science, culture, environment, trade and finance. Finally, they will help strengthen international cooperation towards the development of innovative policies and programmes, and the practice of education for sustainable development.

IV. GETTING STARTED

14. As shown clearly in the Draft Programme and Budget for 2006-2007, UNESCO's actions regarding the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development are firmly integrated within the Organization's major priority area of achieving the EFA goals and the MDGs. UNESCO will weave the key elements of the Decade into all education work. The Decade enables UNESCO to apply the concept of quality education, as determined by the Ministerial Round Table at the 32nd session of the General Conference, to the Organization's priority areas – EFA, literacy, teacher education and HIV/AIDS prevention education, with concepts and materials from all its areas of competence. The Organization is not starting from scratch. Much is already being done intersectorally; all sectors are already working in support of ESD, as well as for sustainable development.

15. UNESCO has begun, under the leadership of the Education Sector, to develop its own "roadmap", an action plan, for how it will respond to the International Implementation Scheme. One of the tangible, quantifiable results listed in document 33 C/5 (para. 01312) is a UNESCO plan for its substantive contribution to DESD. Developing this plan is vital and UNESCO embarked on it immediately following the conclusion of the 171st session of the Executive Board. To be responsive to the Decade's goals and diverse audiences, the UNESCO plan is structured around the four domains of education for sustainable development. What follows is a brief overview of the activities and initiatives that UNESCO programme sectors, field offices and institutes will carry out for DESD.

A. Promoting and improving basic education

16. Access to basic education remains a problem for many, especially girls and illiterate adults. The quality of basic education must improve to focus on sharing knowledge, skills, values and perspectives throughout a lifetime of learning that encourages sustainable livelihoods and helps citizens to lead sustainable lives. This domain most closely aligns itself with EFA and the MDGs. ESD is characterized by several features in its transformative mission, including: interdisciplinary curriculum; critical thinking and problem-solving; multi-method curricula incorporating art, drama, debate and life experience; engaged and participatory learning with the community; and learning that is relevant and responsive to local issues and situations.

17. UNESCO's efforts initially will concentrate on the dissemination of education materials illustrating the main aspects of environmental protection for the primary-school level, and the introduction of education modules aiming to increase awareness of sustainable development at the secondary education level. Encouraging the adaptation of national education legislation to improve the presence of sustainable development in the curriculum, creating information networks through

education institutions and promoting research programmes in higher education centres and universities will constitute an important part of the action plan in the medium term.

18. Pedagogical science kits on dry lands will be developed for primary and secondary schools. Posters illustrating the main aspects of biodiversity will be developed and disseminated; educational materials will be prepared on combating desertification, the role of wetland ecosystems and the sustainable management of those ecosystems. Materials for primary and secondary schools to stimulate curiosity and interest in the Earth's resources and outer space will be developed, as well as a series of booklets on ESD issues for primary-school level and non-formal education.

B. Reorienting existing education programmes

19. Rethinking and revising education from nursery school through university will be done in a holistic and interdisciplinary manner to include a real focus on the development of knowledge, skills, perspectives and values related to sustainability in each of the three realms – social, environmental, and economic. This implies a review of existing curricula in terms of their objectives and content to develop transdisciplinary understandings of sustainability. It also requires a review of recommended and mandated approaches to teaching, learning and assessment so that lifelong learning skills for sustainable development are fostered.

20. An important aspect of UNESCO's efforts will be directed towards education policies and strategies, and capacity-building. The expansion of technology, rapid social changes, increasing interdependence between countries, more international migration, and changes in consumption patterns and production processes are all consequences of globalization. In terms of education policies and strategies, three principal lines of action should be developed: re-examination of national policies in the perspective of sustainable development; re-orientation of education systems and training process; and the integration of education and information within strategies and national plans of sustainable development.

21. UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs and networks will be promoted to reinforce ESD, especially in terms of its conceptual elaboration and its applications to "real world" problems. A think tank of researchers and UNESCO Chairs will be convened to develop recommendations to policy-makers and other stakeholders, and support the development of a comprehensive research plan and strategies on teaching and learning for ESD. Other activities foreseen for inclusion in the short term include introducing teaching modules of sustainable development at all levels of the education system; setting-up a "training of trainers" mechanism for enhancing teachers' skills; including a sustainable development dimension in EFA national plans; and the systematic dissemination of DESD information for teachers and students. The medium-term plan will include introducing new curricula on sustainable development issues in primary and secondary education; improving national training programmes for teachers; and conducting studies on trends in curricular reform.

22. Sustainable development issues will be further integrated into science education, in particular, through the Sandwatch project in cooperation with the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet). Bilingual and intercultural materials and methods that profile indigenous knowledge, practices and world views in the classroom will be developed. An environmental Encyclopedia, based on the Solomon Islander knowledge, will be piloted in local schools to develop teacher manuals and methods. Lessons learned and best practices resulting from "Youth Visioning Projects" on sustainable development will be exchanged and extended to include island communities. The long-term efforts of the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) project include transforming pedagogical methods to ensure an active role for local knowledge-holders, and to move learning outside of the classroom and into meaningful natural settings. It will

enlarge its field of action to include additional indigenous groups and create networks among them to share experiences and lessons learned.

C. Developing public understanding and awareness of sustainability

23. Progress towards more sustainable societies requires an informed and active citizenry at local, national and global level. Achieving the goals of sustainable development requires widespread community education and a responsible media committed to sustainability.

24. The Education Sector, in cooperation with other programme sectors, will contribute to consolidating the concept of education for sustainable development, including fostering dialogue between education stakeholders for the exchange of experience and information on education and sustainable development. Closer links between educational institutions and local communities will be encouraged to facilitate the use of knowledge by communities and generate knowledge for sustainable development. Contests and awards will be organized within and among schools on ESD-related projects (essays, debates, small income-generating projects) as well as joint school and community initiatives (reforestation, recycling, conferences and debates, internships at local businesses, input from local actors for introduction of local contents, etc.). *Connect*, UNESCO's International Newsletter for Science, Technology and Environmental Education, and the UNESCO portal on DESD will provide regular reporting and updating on the work accomplished by UNESCO as lead agency in the implementation of DESD.

25. The Science Sector will continue to work very closely with the Education Sector in support of the Decade. The Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme will promote approaches to link ecosystem management and local community needs, and will encourage partnership between all sectors of society through awareness and training actions. Special attention will be given to traditional and indigenous values in managing cultural and biological diversity. The Coastal Regions and Small Islands (CSI) platform will reinforce "learning by doing" to contribute further to the sustainable development of small islands. The Science Sector and the specialized regional centre in Tehran will publish training and awareness-raising materials for urban planners and managers, water managers and the public at large. The UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education (Delft) will focus on education, research, capacity-building and policy advice. The International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) will contribute to enhancing knowledge on and awareness of earth sciences and the management of natural resources. The Space Education Programme (SEP) will promote space as an educational and research tool in science and technology to achieve sustainable development and meet the MDGs. Partnerships will be established with science museums, science networking will be mobilized on ESD concepts, mainly in Latin America, and an Inter-parliamentary Conference on sustainable development issues will be organized in the Mediterranean region. IOC proposes awareness programmes at various hierarchical levels in developing countries where the coasts are most at risk. "What-If" scenarios as an aid in planning sustainable activities in the coastal zone will be proposed. The Science and Culture Sectors will collaborate to prepare one issue of the magazine *Museum International* on science and sustainability.

26. Sustainable development is at the core of the Communication Sector's overall strategy on knowledge societies as new patterns of growth and wealth creation are increasingly determined by knowledge and information which open up possibilities for more effective poverty reduction and sustainable development. The Sector focuses on both traditional and new communication means. Its strategy is to exploit the changing communication environment from a traditional (vertical communication, limited sources, unipolar) to a new framework where people owning their communication tools develop horizontal networks with an infinite range of information sources, through awareness-raising, capacity-building and partnership with the private sector.

27. The Communication Sector will play a key role in raising awareness among media professionals on the various dimensions of sustainable development, so as to underpin efforts at promoting broad knowledge about sustainable development and relevant practices. Media professionals will be trained and networked around sustainable development issues. Knowledge exchange and networking for policy-makers, practitioners and advocacy groups will also be facilitated. Raising awareness and consciousness that the private sector can be real players for sustainable development, in accordance with the ethical principles expressed through their corporate social responsibility programmes, is another vital sphere of activity.

28. The Decade provides an excellent opportunity for UNESCO's ongoing efforts to incorporate the issue of disaster risk reduction in educational programmes. The essence of these efforts will be to contribute to the creation of a "Culture of Prevention", wider public understanding of the risks and vulnerabilities, and how human action may increase or reduce them. UNESCO will advocate and promote, through awareness-raising campaigns as well as educational and training initiatives, the use of renewable energies.

D. Training

29. The development of specialized vocational and professional training programmes to ensure that all sectors of the workforce have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their work in a sustainable manner is critical.

30. All programme sectors, regional bureaux, field offices, institutes and networks will assist in building capacity in ESD at national policy- and decision-making levels, and advocate for the recognition of the value and impact of non-formal and informal learning and continuing education for sustainable development. ESD activities to focus on capacity development through "learning by doing" will be reinforced. Initiatives will include communities planning their own future development, groups sharing eco-friendly practices, youth promoting local languages, and school children adopting a hands-on approach to addressing environmental issues.

31. UNESCO will endeavour to globally promote ESD in higher education and will pursue its course aimed at building inclusive and sustainable education systems and institutions. It will enhance the central role of education and training in the common pursuit of sustainable development as well as facilitate collaboration and networking, exchange and interaction in ESD in a multi-stakeholder approach. It will continue to support inter-university cooperation and networking to facilitate experience-sharing and the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary innovative approaches to sustainability in educational institutions, especially through North-South and South-South cooperation in the areas of training and research.

32. Science education training activities will be organized on a regular basis, in support of specific ecosystem-related activities (marine, mountain, desert biodiversity, etc.) and in the areas of conflict prevention and management. Capacity-building and water education and training will be reinforced, within the framework of action of the International Hydrological Programme (IHP). An inventory of needs in terms of education, training and technology transfer in the area of urban water will be carried out to improve integrated planning and development, as well as to strengthen support to training and capacity-building networks related to integrated water resource management. This will be done through the Framework Programme for Research Education and Training in Water (FETWater) in South Africa.