The world's first Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, organized by Unesco in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), was convened in Tbilisi, Georgia (USSR), from 14 to 26 October 1977.

Delegates from 66 Member States and observers from two non-Member States participated as well as representatives and observers from eight agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, three other intergovernmental organizations and 20 international, nongovernmental organizations. In all 265 delegates and 65 representatives and observers took part in the Tbilisi Conference.

The Conference was opened by Unesco's Director-General Amadou-Mahaté M'Bow and welcomed by a message of greeting from Leonid I. Brezhnev, Secretary General of the Communist Party of the USSR and Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. Similarly, participants were welcomed by Z.A. Pataridze, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR, host of the Tbilisi Conference. Unep's Executive Director Mostafa K. Tolba then joined Mr. M'Bow in an address to the participants before they began almost two weeks of working sessions.

Adopted by acclamation at the close of the Intergovernmental Conference, the Tbilisi Declaration noted the harmony and consensus which had prevailed, and the unanimous accord on the important role of environmental education in the preservation and improvement of the world's environment, as well as in the sound and balanced development of the world's communities. The Declaration follows in full:

The Tbilisi Declaration

In the last few decades, man has, through his power to transform his environment, wrought accelerated changes in the balance of nature. The result is frequent exposure of living species to dangers which may prove irreversible.

The Declaration of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment organized in Stockholm in 1972 proclaimed, "to defend and improve the environment for present and future generations has become an imperative goal for mankind." This undertaking urgently calls for new strategies, incorporated into development, which are particularly in the developing countries a prerequisite for any such improvement. Solidarity and equality in relations between nations should constitute the basis of a new international order, and bring together as soon as possible, all available resources. Education utilizing the findings of science and technology should play a leading role in creating an awareness and a better understanding of environmental problems. It must foster positive patterns of conduct towards the environment and nations' use of their resources.

Environmental education should be provided for all ages, at all levels and in both formal and nonformal education. The mass media have a great responsibility to make their immense resources available for this educational mission. Environmental specialists, as well as those whose actions and decisions can have a marked effect on the environment, should be provided in the course of their training with the necessary knowledge and skills and be given a full sense of their responsibilities in this respect.

Environmental education, properly understood, should constitute a comprehensive lifelong education,
one responsive to changes in a rapidly changing world. It should prepare the individual for life, through an understanding of the major problems of the contemporary world, and the provision of skills and attributes needed to play a productive role towards improving life and protecting the environment with due regard given to ethical values. By adopting a holistic approach, rooted in a broad interdisciplinary base, it recreates an overall perspective which acknowledges the fact that natural environment and man-made environment are profoundly interdependent. It helps reveal the enduring continuum which links the acts of today to the consequences for tomorrow. It demonstrates the interdependencies among national communities and the need for solidarity among all mankind.

Environmental education must look outward to the community. It should involve the individual in an active problem-solving process within the context of specific realities, and it should encourage initiative, a sense of responsibility and commitment to build a better and a more sustainable environment. By its very nature, environmental education can make a powerful contribution to the renovation of the educational process.

In order to achieve these goals, environmental education requires a number of specific actions to fill the gaps which, despite outstanding endeavours, continue to exist in our present education system.

Accordingly, the Tbilisi Conference:

- Appeals to Member States to include in their educational policies measures designed to introduce environmental concerns, activities and contents into their education systems, on the basis of the above objectives and characteristics;
- Invites educational authorities to promote and intensify thinking, research and innovation in regard to environmental education;
- Urges Member States to collaborate in this field, in particular by exchanging experiences, research findings, documentation and materials and by making their training facilities widely available to teachers and specialists from other countries; and lastly,
- Appeals to the international community to give generously of its aid in order to strengthen this collaboration in a field which symbolizes the need for solidarity of all peoples and may be regarded as particularly conducive to the promotion of international understanding and to the cause of peace.

The Role, Objectives and Characteristics of Environmental Education

The Tbilisi Declaration together with two of the recommendations of the Conference constitutes the framework, principles and guidelines for environmental education at all levels — local, national, regional and international — and for all age groups both inside and outside the formal school system.

1. The Conference recommends the adoption of certain criteria which will help to guide efforts to develop environmental education at the national, regional and global levels:
   - Whereas it is a fact that biological and physical features constitute the natural basis of the human environment, its ethical, social, cultural and economic dimensions also play their part in determining the lines of approach and the instruments whereby people may understand and make better use of natural resources in satisfying their needs.
   - Environmental education is the result of the reorientation and dovetailing of different disciplines and educational experiences which facilitate an integrated perception of the problems of the environment, enabling more rational actions capable of meeting social needs to be taken.
   - A basic aim of environmental education is to succeed in making individuals and communities understand the complex nature of the natural and the built environments resulting from the interaction of their biological, physical, social, economic and cultural aspects, and acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes and practical skills to participate in a responsible and effective way in anticipating and solving environmental problems, and in the management of the quality of the environment.
   - A further basic aim of environmental education is clearly to show the economic, political and ecological interdependence of the modern world, in which decisions and actions by the different countries can have international repercussions. Environmental education should, in this regard, help to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity among countries and regions as the foundation for a new international order which will guarantee the conservation and improvement of the environment.
   - Special attention should be paid to understanding the complex relations between socio-economic development and the improvement of the environment.
   - For this purpose concerning environmental education should provide the necessary knowledge for interpretation of the complex phenomena that shape the environment; encourage those ethical, economic and esthetic values which, constituting the basis of self-discipline, will further the development of conduct compatible with the preservation and improvement of the environment; it should also provide a wide range of practical skills required in the devising and application of effective solutions to environmental problems.
   - To carry out these tasks, environmental education should bring about a closer link between educational processes and real life, building its activities around the environmental problems that are faced by particular communities and focusing analysis on these by means of an interdisciplinary, comprehensive approach which will permit a proper understanding of environmental problems.
   - Environmental education should cater to all ages and socio-professional groups in the population. It should be addressed to (a) the general non-specialist public of young people and adults whose daily conduct has a decisive influence on the preservation and improvement of the environment; (b) to particular social groups whose professional activities affect the quality of the environment; and (c) to scientists and technicians whose specialized research and work will lay the foundations of knowledge on which education, training and efficient management of the environment should be based.
   - To achieve the effective development of environmental education, full advantage must be taken of all public and private facilities available to society for the education of the population: the formal education system, different forms of nonformal education, and the mass media.
• To make an effective contribution towards improving the environment, educational action must be linked with legislation, policies, measures of control and the decisions that governments may adopt in relation to the environment.

II. The Conference endorses the following goals, objectives and guiding principles for environmental education:

The goals of environmental education are:
• to foster clear awareness of, and concern about, economic, social, political and ecological interdependence in urban and rural areas;
• to provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment;
• to create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society as a whole towards the environment.

The categories of environmental education objectives are:

Awareness: to help social groups and individuals acquire an awareness and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems.

Knowledge: to help social groups and individuals gain a variety of experience in, and acquire a basic understanding of, the environment and its associated problems.

Attitudes: to help social groups and individuals acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment and the motivation for actively participating in environmental improvement and protection.

Skills: to help social groups and individuals acquire the skills for identifying and solving environmental problems.

Participation: to provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working toward resolution of environmental problems.

Guiding principles — environmental education should:
• consider the environment in its totality — natural and built, technological and social (economic, political, cultural-historical, moral, esthetic);
• be a part of the lifelong process, beginning at the pre-school level and continuing through all formal and non-formal stages;
• be interdisciplinary in its approach, drawing on the specific content of each discipline in making possible a holistic and balanced perspective;
• examine major environmental issues from local, national, regional and international points of view so that students receive insights into environmental conditions in other geographical areas;
• focus on current and potential environmental situations while taking into account the historical perspective;
• promote the value and necessity of local, national and international cooperation in the prevention and solution of environmental problems;
• explicitly consider environmental aspects in plans for development and growth;
• enable learners to have a role in planning their learning experiences and provide an opportunity for making decisions and accepting their consequences;
• relate environmental sensitivity, knowledge, problem-solving skills and values clarification to every age, but with special emphasis on environmental sensitivity to the learner’s own community in early years;

• help learners discover the symptoms and real causes of environmental problems;
• emphasize the complexity of environmental problems and thus the need to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
• utilize diverse learning environments and a broad array of educational approaches to teaching/learning about and from the environment with due stress on practical activities and first-hand experience.

Opening Ceremony of Tbilisi Conference

In his message of welcome, which was read on opening day, Mr. Leonid I. Brezhnev stressed that “further progress in the economic, scientific and cultural fields must take into account the consequences of human action on nature; and it is clear that development of a considerate and careful attitude to the environment, together with dissemination of the knowledge and skills necessary for its protection and improvement, should become an integral part of the general system of education and training.” The Chairman concluded: “May I wish your Conference success in carrying out the noble tasks before it.”

In his address, UNEP’s Executive Director Mostafa K. Tolba emphasized the importance of everyone — planner, builder, farmer or general citizen—becoming “environmentally conscious through proper environmental education.” Further, that “environmental education is essential in integrating the knowledge generated by the important UN conferences of the past five years—on the human environment, on population, food, human settlements, water and desertification.” In this connection, Dr. Tolba described the role of UNEP in relation to environment and its cooperation with Unesco in particular and with other agencies of the UN system, as well as with nongovernmental organizations, with respect to environmental education.

Unesco’s Director-General Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow expressed his appreciation for the host country’s cordial welcome, then thanked Dr. Tolba for the contribution UNEP had made to the organization of the Tbilisi Conference, the first of its kind on a worldwide basis. Unesco itself, he said, had very early been concerned with environmental problems, but the concept of environment had evolved: initially confined to its physical and biological aspects, it now also covered the social, economic and technological environment.

With regard to the role and nature of environmental education, Mr. M’Bow continued, “We have now passed the stage of exchanging fragmentary information and knowledge on specific environmental problems, such as that of pollution, the deterioration of the natural environment or the conservation of resources. A more ambitious task now faces the international community: that of devising and putting into effect a type of education and training which will enable individuals of all ages and from all backgrounds to assimilate the values, the basic concepts and the practical knowledge which will help them to an awareness of environmental problems, help them to adapt their everyday behaviour accordingly and thus make a useful contribution to the joint effort to safeguard the environment…

“Lastly, environmental education [should] help to develop in members of every community—in different ways, of course, depending on the groups involved—a

January 1978 3
body of knowledge and a critical sense enabling them to be informed participants in the planning, implementation and monitoring of measures to preserve and improve the environment. This last, in turn, means an interdisciplinary, lifelong education with a problem-solving approach. "It is not enough for environmental education to be an adjunct to the normal curriculum. Environmental concerns must be seen as an ever-present dimension and function of education in the broadest sense of the term, whether in-school or out-of-school, in all its forms and at all levels."

**Recommended Policies and Strategies**

After the opening ceremony, the Tbilisi Conference adopted an agenda whose principal items were the following: (1) major environmental problems in contemporary society; (2) the role of education in facing the challenges of environmental problems; (3) current efforts at the national and international levels for the development of environmental education; (4) strategies for the development of environmental education at the national level; and (5) regional and international cooperation for the development of environmental education: needs and modalities. (For details on the provisional agenda, working documents, background and preparations for the Tbilisi Conference, see Connect, Vol. II, No. 2. For full, official texts of all recommendations plus an annex of Conference agenda, participants and speeches, see Final Report of the Tbilisi Conference, available spring 1978 on request to Unesco, address on last page of this issue.)

**Environmental problems and the role of education**

Participants from all regions agreed that growing recognition of the implications and consequences of environmental problems must be coupled with an increasing awareness of solidarity among nations. Improved management of the environment to serve humanity should aim at reducing disparities, and at bringing about a new international order based on equity, in the perspective of a new international order. Here environmental education has an evident role to play if the issues involved are to be grasped and if all concerned are to acquire the knowledge, skills and social attitudes which can modify the existing situation for the better.

Moreover, models of growth and development must be reconsidered. It has become necessary to distinguish between the essentials and the "luxuries" for environment as well as development. This was considered another reason for a holistic approach to the study of environmental problems, which require the contribution of all natural, social and human sciences for their analysis and solution. Nor was their ethical dimension viewed as less important in any way.

One formal recommendation succinctly indicates the general conclusion: "The Conference recommends that governments systematically evaluate the environmental impact of development activities, and requests that development assistance strategies and programmes provide opportunities for countries to establish environmental training programmes which include the evaluation of development from the standpoint of the human environment."

Another recommendation similarly spells out the Conference's view of the role of education in the context of environmental problems and sound eco-development (see above, p. 2).

**Current efforts**

National reports prepared for the Conference and statements of the delegations testify to the significant advances made by a number of countries towards implementing environmental education programmes both inside and outside the school system. Important as these efforts and achievements may be—and participants gave encouraging evidence to this effect—there are still gaps and shortcomings. Less seems to have been achieved at the secondary level than at the primary level in schools both quantitatively and in terms of innovation. Little has been done for training out-of-school educators or in-service teachers in environmental matters. There are still far too few trained for the teaching of ecology or capable of effective participation in a multidisciplinary approach. Last, but most important, there still appears to be a considerable need for developing or refining overall environmental education strategies in all forms and at all levels of education.

**Strategies at the national level**

To achieve the objectives of environmental education, the Conference recommended that each country set up or strengthen the appropriate organizational structures, which could include representatives of educational and environmental protection authorities, practising teachers at different levels, organizations concerned with environmental education and the mass media, etc., for the following functions: (1) to facilitate relations with Unesco, UNEP and other organizations involved in environmental education (EE); (2) to coordinate EE initiatives; (3) to serve as a consultative body in EE at the governmental level; (4) to play a role as a clearinghouse and information centre in EE; (5) to develop in various social and occupational groups an awareness and knowledge about the issues associated with EE in the country; (6) to promote collaborative relationships among EE associations, civil groups and the scientific, research and education communities; (7) to provide frameworks and guidelines for the establishment of EE action committees within the country; (8) to assess the need for EE research, development and evaluation; and (9) to encourage and facilitate the contribution to EE programmes for nongovernmental organizations, including voluntary bodies.

**Programmes and curricula**—EE should not be just one more subject to add to existing programmes but should be incorporated into programmes intended for all learners, whatever their age. A new joint pattern of work should be drawn up, involving home, community and school, to introduce young people to environmental issues. Environmental education should serve as a catalyst or common denominator in the renewal of contemporary programmes and curricula.

In this connection, the Conference recommended that:

- subject disciplines identify and give priority to their special contribution to environmental education;
- and those responsible for the planning and implementation of general and vocational programmes encourage interdepartmental collaboration and coordination so that environmental goals and objectives may be achieved;
- responsible authorities support curriculum develop-
The success of environmental education will not lie merely in bringing about a number of changes in the system and methods of education. This task requires the application of new concepts, new methods and new techniques as part of an overall effort stressing the social role of educational institutions and the establishment of a new relationship between all those engaged together in the education process. To this end, legislative measures may be taken providing the State with a legal framework in which to draw up an environmental education system for the entire community.

Although environmental education should constitute one single organic and continuous process, each stage of this process has its own particular educative value.

In primary school, for instance, a few useful directions in which to promote environmental education would be: programmes of visits, the use of free time for activities in close contact with the environment, the development of a critical faculty and ability to see things in the round, and the transcending of the cultural and scientific levels so as to gain an awareness of relations with the community and move towards solutions.

Secondary schooling should take the pupil on to a more ecologically, socially, politically and economically based application of ideas about the environment. University-level education should see the introduction, as a basis for all specialized courses (for engineers, architects, planners, economists, etc.), of thorough knowledge of the functioning of ecosystems and an insight into the socio-economic factors governing the relations between people and the environment, together with knowledge of the characteristics, limits and possibilities of the scientific and technical revolution.

In nonformal and out-of-class education, strategies for the introduction, promotion and development of environmental education depend on particular situations (e.g., rural setting or urban setting; occupations, socio-cultural background, etc.). They should be based on channels of social communication, on the mass media and on the various movements or associations. In addition to their special educational role, these activities are of vital importance since they make it possible to overcome many of the administrative or bureaucratic difficulties associated with formal education.

Teaching/learning materials — In this category, participants recommended that:

- relevant authorities work out criteria on which to base the environmental content of the curricula to be offered to pupils and students according to individual needs and taking into account local, social, occupational and other factors; more specifically, basic principles should be formulated for the preparation of model textbooks and reading materials for use at all levels within formal and non-formal systems;
- in developing low-cost teaching aids and materials, the fullest use should be made of existing documentation, and educational research findings should be drawn upon, the value of existing teaching materials should be assessed and new teaching aids for environmental education should be developed as necessary;
- teachers and learners should be involved in the preparation and adaptation of instructional materials for environmental education;
- teachers in training should be given an understanding of as wide a range as possible of educational
materials and aids, with special reference to low-cost materials and opportunities for adaptation and improv-
isation in local circumstances.

Research, innovation and evaluation — Similarly in this
category, the recommendation of the Conference to
Member States is specific and detailed, namely, that:

- they develop national policies and strategies fur-
thering environmental education research projects and
incorporate their findings into the general educational
process through appropriate courses;
- they carry out research concerning the goals and
objectives of environmental education, the epistemo-
logical and institutional structures that affect consid-
eration of environment demands, and the knowledge
and attitudes of individuals, in order to identify more
precisely the most effective educational conditions,
types of action by teachers and processes of assimila-
tion of knowledge by pupils, as well as obstacles
to the modification of concepts, values and attitudes
held by individuals, and the use of these concepts,
values and attitudes in relation to environmental
behaviour;
- they undertake research concerning the conditions
that foster development of environmental education,
directed more particularly towards: identification of
content, taking into consideration specific national
and local features which might constitute an effective
basis for educational programmes for those in and
out of the formal education system as well as for
specialists; the establishment of methodologies for the
effective acquisition of the relevant concepts, values
and attitudes by the various population groups, young
and adult, receiving formal and non-formal education;
and innovation in learning environments;
- they undertake research for the development of
educational methods and curricula in order to sensi-
tize the general public, particularly with regard to use
of the mass media and the preparation of evaluation
tools for assessing the impact of such curricula;
- they include in the courses of initial and in-service
training of teachers, research methodologies for design-
ning and developing methods and instruments which
enable them to effectively fulfil the objectives of envi-
ronmental education;
- they undertake research with a view to the design
and development of purpose-built instructional sys-
tems, methods and materials enabling interdiscipli-
nary environmental curricula to be developed. With
this in mind, the possibility of using elements of the
natural and social sciences and the arts as a basis
for integration, should be studied;
- they undertake research in order to develop low-
cost educational methods and materials enabling
educators to train or retrain themselves on their own;
- they take steps to promote exchanges of informa-
tion among national educational research bodies, the
broad dissemination of research findings, and eval-
uation in the educational system;
- they undertake systematic analysis of educational
experience and materials from external sources in
order to determine their educational relevance and
to bring them into line with local socio-economic,
ecological and cultural conditions.

Training of personnel — Both pre-service and in-service
training of teachers, planners, administrators and
other key education personnel in environmental studies
and concerns were stressed by Conference participants.
It was recommended that the staff of teacher education
institutions be assisted in this regard; that the per-
sonnel educated receive environmental training related
to the urban or rural area in which they are working
or will work; and that such training be undertaken
in close cooperation with professional organizations
of teachers at both the national and international
levels.

Stress was also laid on the importance of pre- and
in-service environmental training of professionals,
such as economists, business administrators, archi-
tects, planners, engineers, technicians and others
whose activities, while not specifically in the field of
environmental planning and management, nevertheless
directly or indirectly have a major impact on the
environment. It was recommended that their training
include a common core of interdisciplinary environ-
mental studies dealing with both the natural and
social environments. In addition, special attention
should be given to the development of suitable method-
ologies and institutional arrangements.

An effective method of such training would involve
a problem-solving approach on an integrated, multi-
disciplinary team basis, since it develops professionals
who, while retaining their original expertise, thus
acquire an interdisciplinary training and ability to
work as members of multidisciplinary teams.

Similar but more intensive training was recommended
for those working on specific problems of the envi-
ronment, such as biologists, ecologists, hydrologists,
toxicologists, social scientists, agronomists, foresters,
landscape architects, oceanographers, limnologists,
meteorologists and sanitary engineers. An interdisci-
plinary component was considered indispensable for
the training of these specialists. The reorganization of
engineering schools and the incorporation of environ-
mental education in the training of engineers was
deemed an urgent need.

Special reference was made to environmental edu-
cation in colleges and universities as centres for
research and the training of qualified personnel. This
meant development of appropriate teaching aids and
textbooks and promotion of close cooperation among
university bodies—departments, faculties, etc.—with
the specific objective of forming experts in environ-
mental education. Such cooperation might differ
according to the structure of university education in
each country, but should combine contributions from
physics, chemistry, biology, socio-economic studies,
ethics, education sciences, etc.

Information programmes and strategies — Stressing the
importance of the dissemination of specialized and
general environmental knowledge and the devel-
opment of public awareness of environmental issues,
the Conference recommended that Member States:

- implement and develop EE programmes for all
sectors of the population, associating in the process,
where appropriate, nongovernmental bodies involved
in environmental matters;
- establish or encourage the establishment of EE
programmes in the formal and nonformal education
sectors with the cooperation, where possible, of
existing bodies and organizations, both public and
private; develop the exchange of relevant materials
and information between public bodies and private
organizations concerned with environmental in either
or both education sectors;
- support nonformal EE activities conducted by
institutions and associations, including youth organ-
izations;
- envisage public information campaigns on nationally
and regionally relevant environmental problems, such
as fresh-water resources, to promote the general education of the public, such campaigns to be conducted over the next few years by the various Member States acting so far as possible in a concerted fashion; 
- include in their EE strategies the preparation of programmes which provide information on present or planned actions with major potential impact on the environment, such programmes stressing the importance of participation by the general public and nongovernmental organizations in the relevant decision-making process, and presenting different possible solutions to the problems in question, thus aiming at developing a responsible attitude on the part of participants;
- encourage and develop the organization of museums and exhibitions in order to increase public awareness of environmental issues and of environmental education itself.

**Mass media** — In recognition of the particular importance of the mass media in environmental education, inside as well as outside the formal school system, the Conference recommended that Member States:
- encourage the dissemination of knowledge about the protection and improvement of the environment by press, radio and television;
- organize training courses for journalists, newspaper editors, radio and television producers and other relevant mass media personnel, which will enable them to deal properly with environmental issues and education and to exchange among countries programmes and films dealing with environmental concerns;
- ascertain that EE programmes provide for suitable measures to ensure their reaching broad sectors of the urban and rural population not included in formal education programmes by, among other means, the mass media and with the participation of social institutions and organizations.

It was also recommended that Unesco, in cooperation with Unep, encourage national, regional and international organizations to establish a network for the exchange of information on mass media materials for environmental education for each region.

**Regional and international cooperation for the development of environmental education**

Delegates considered that, if one of the aims of environmental education was to inculcate the spirit of responsibility and solidarity between nations, an awareness of economic, political and ecological interdependence, then overall cooperation at the regional and international level was certainly essential. They added that there was an equally essential need for subregional cooperation almost as everyday practice, since ecological and geographical proximity, linguistic and cultural affinities, similarities of socioeconomic situations and community of views and interests provided a practical and effective basis for joint action. The same delegates emphasized the need to go further, since subregional cooperation activities could only be disseminated by means of wider regional cooperation. Similarly, both the developing and the industrialized countries would benefit from increased international cooperation in environmental education.

All the delegates who spoke referred to information, training, research and experimentation on content, methods and teaching materials as among other fields where regional and international cooperation could and should make an effective contribution to the development of environmental education. As regards the main modalities for action, those which seemed to lend themselves most easily to cooperative action and which related to the various steps taken by governmental and nongovernmental organizations were: exchanges of all kinds, at all levels, taking various forms, such as meetings, exhibitions, festivals, etc.; studies and surveys on innovations and activities for the general promotion of environmental education; projects, in particular pilot projects, intended for national groups or institutions working in both the formal and nonformal fields and aiming to test and develop environmental education innovations.

Delegates considered the question of means and instruments for the execution, in accordance with the main modalities indicated above, of regional and international cooperation activities. Delegates considered that effective coordination should be exercised at the international level to encourage, support and organize efforts and initiatives in the fields of exchanges of information, training activities for young and adult personnel or the preparation and testing of environmental education materials. It was considered that Unesco, by virtue of its competence, structures and experience, was suited for fulfilling this coordinating role and for giving a lead in international cooperation in environmental education. The role of coordinating international cooperation in environmental education which the Tbilisi Conference has entrusted to Unesco requires that the Organization pursue and develop its own cooperation with the other agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, more especially the United Nations Environment Programme, whose functions in international cooperation in relation to the environment mark it out for primacy in this respect. As regards the question of structures, the great majority of delegates were, however, firmly opposed to the creation of new bodies, the need for and usefulness of which seemed doubtful in their view, for the implementation of international cooperation.

The importance of pilot projects to try out innovations and teaching materials was strongly emphasized, as was the impact of such projects on the environment and on the illiterate masses of certain countries. In regard to international projects implemented at national level, those conducted under the MAB programme were singled out for the attention of the Conference by several speakers as examples to be followed.

Specifically, the Conference recommended:

1. **To Member States:** to take all necessary action to implement in the broadest possible way and in accordance with the needs and possibilities of each nation concerned, the results of this Conference on environmental education, and in this respect to draw up action-oriented plans and timetables for actions:
- to foster bilateral, regional and international cooperation within all branches of environmental education, based upon scientific research and a broad exchange of information and experience, cooperation on programmes, etc.;
- to facilitate comprehensive approaches to the solution of environmental problems within the jurisdiction of each country concerned by safeguarding the necessary prerequisites for environmental education — comprehensive or coordinated legislation, financial, organizational and other measures;
- to inform other Member States as well as the Secretariat of Unesco about the time schedules, results, methods, etc., concerning environmental education
and to forward to the Secretariat of Unesco all materials in this respect which they would consider usable elsewhere;

- to extend the necessary advice in environmental education to other Member States or their organizations.

2. To Unesco:

- to establish a regular information bulletin (or service) aimed mainly at informing Member States about all actions on environmental education prepared for a given period by the Secretariat of Unesco, by Member States or by organizations; and about new publications, research work, methods, experiences, etc., in close cooperation with the IRS system and other UN agencies;
- to foster international symposia, seminars, films, shows, etc., aimed at environmental education;
- to request the Executive Director of UNEP to support Unesco’s actions in implementation of recommendations adopted by the Tbilisi Conference;
- to promote standing implementation of the Plan of Action, adopted by the United Nations Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, with further emphasis on environmental education.

The Conference further recommended to Unesco:

- that it expand the field of its activities in environmental education and give it a greater role in future plans for the general area of education programmes and actions;
- that with the assistance of UNEP, it consider the possibilities of further development of the International Environmental Education Programme;
- that it expand the functions of its Regional Offices to enable them, in cooperation with Unesco National Commissions, to help: (a) develop or adapt instructional materials related to local environmental problems for use in the formal and nonformal education of primary and secondary school-age students; (b) create regional source books for environmental education which will foster and facilitate development of locally appropriate instructional materials; (c) encourage activities of youth groups and nongovernmental organizations geared to improving and understanding of local ecosystems and environmental problems, taking into account urban as well as natural environments; (d) identify new and promising approaches to environmental education; conduct and evaluate pilot projects; systematically disseminate to other potential users those aspects of projects which are applicable; (e) provide educational opportunities to teachers and school administrators; (f) supply environmental education materials for use by the mass media; (g) conduct an expanded programme of pilot project research, documentation and evaluation in environmental education, and give wide dissemination of the results of these projects and similar activities through Unesco’s environmental education publication (Connect);
- that it utilize existing institutions to receive, catalogue and disseminate materials useful in environmental education;
- that, in cooperation with UNEP, it develop model training courses, seminars, etc., on environmental and development issues for use by the UN organizations and others in the training of officials of the developing countries and those concerned with assistance to them. Existing international training institutes and programmes should expand their training curriculum to include subjects on basic ecological relationships, impact assessment and establishment of effective institutional and regulator mechanisms;
- that it place more emphasis on the sharing of environmental experiences and remedial measures between developing countries;
- that it issue, on a regular basis, worldwide directories of environmental education organizations and personnel from existing information collected and compiled by Unesco;
- that it cooperate closely with nongovernmental organizations and support their activities in environmental education;
- that, in cooperation with UNEP, it proclaim a specific environmental topic to be treated on a worldwide scale at appropriate intervals in consultation with relevant regional and international organizations.

By Way of Conclusion

In his closing speech, Unesco’s Director-General on the last day of the Tbilisi Intergovernmental Conference, 26 October 1977, suggested that the goals, objectives and guiding principles established for environmental education constituted “both a milestone and a starting point.”

In this connection, a key passage from Mr. M’Bow’s closing address might be quoted: “As an essential component of a global, lifelong, problem-solving education that prepares people for active participation, environmental education follows the guiding line which, in most countries, governs the movement of educational systems towards greater relevance, greater realism and better two-way contact between the physical and social environment in order to make humanity more closely involved with its surroundings.” Thus, “environmental education perhaps represents an ideal opportunity to restore to education an ethical function it has sometimes lost and that educators in many countries... would like to see it recover, drawing inspiration from the needs and concerns of the contemporary world.”

In summary, the Tbilisi Conference’s recommendations “form the equivalent of an action plan” for the development of environmental education at the national, regional and international levels. As for Unesco itself, the Director-General pledged to intensify the Organization’s work in this programme area “in the light of the Conference’s recommendations” and “to move into a more operational phase.” This meant, inter alia, “making aid from Unesco available to Member States which would like to launch pilot projects”; considering a “bank” of experts on environmental education; augmenting “work in the exchange of experience, in training and in encouraging the production of teaching materials”; and strengthening the Secretariat and Unesco’s infrastructure in general for the increased promotion of environmental education, particularly “the appointment of specialists in environmental education to the various Regional Offices and the establishment of training facilities or machinery for cooperation between Member States.”

The urgent need for “action to protect the environment and perhaps even more for education to this end,” was the essential appeal of the Tbilisi Declaration, an appeal, the Director-General had no doubt, “will be heeded.”

---

 Connect Published by Unesco, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France

This issue is printed on recycled paper.