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BIENNIAL REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL ON UNESCO'S EFFORTS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS DECADE OF EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2005-2014) INCLUDING THE BONN DECLARATION AND DRAFT STRATEGY

SUMMARY

Pursuant to 181 EX/Decision 5(I), this report provides information on the draft UNESCO strategy for the second half of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014).

1. The global financial and economic crisis has thrown into sharp relief the weaknesses of prevailing economic paradigms and, in the process, stimulated a questioning of widely-held assumptions about desirable lifestyles, development models and personal values. The very suddenness with which the crisis occurred was a shock to those who took stability and continuity for granted. Hopes for speedy recovery have therefore been joined by a desire for viable, long-term solutions and greater sustainability, especially in the perspective of other crises concerning climate change, food and energy.
2. Education has been affected by the new conditions – not only in terms of threats to budgets, aid flows and learning opportunities, but also in terms of the very purposes of education: what kind of society and economy, indeed what kind of future, should education prepare young people for? And how should it respond to the changing realities around us as well as prepare for – and contribute to – a different future? These types of questions have long been important components of education for sustainable development (ESD), but have now acquired new urgency and relevance. This was well captured by the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development held in Bonn, Germany, from 31 March to 2 April 2009, with the Bonn Declaration stating “Investment in education for sustainable development (ESD) is an investment in the future”.
3. As lead agency and international coordinator of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014), UNESCO is called upon to mobilize Member States and stakeholders towards greater engagement with ESD and to lead the global ESD movement to the successful completion of the Decade. Since the DESD concerns everyone, it is up to everyone to contribute, in ways large and small, to changes in thinking, values, attitudes and behaviours

conducive to achieving sustainable development. UNESCO is committed to serving as a change agent through education to mobilize Member States, partners, communities and individuals to implement the Decade. Furthermore, the Organization is committed to further encouraging the United Nations family to support Member States and stakeholders in their efforts to promote the vision and goals of this United Nations decade.

The draft UNESCO strategy for the second half of the DESD

4. Following an internal consultation process, UNESCO has been in contact with the DESD Reference Group, the DESD Monitoring & Evaluation Expert Group, the International Advisory Group for the World Conference on ESD, and the United Nations Inter-Agency Committee for the DESD as part of a multi-stakeholder consultative process to develop a UNESCO strategy for the second half of the Decade. This strategy is aimed at ensuring ownership and commitment on the part of UNESCO programme sectors, institutes and field offices for an accelerated and focused implementation of the DESD.

5. The draft strategy is built on the Bonn Declaration and draws on the findings of the first phase of the DESD monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process as well as on the outcomes of other international ESD meetings and the Fourth International Conference on Environmental Education in Ahmedabad (2007). The Bonn Declaration gives particular emphasis to the importance of education for the global development agenda and underlines the essential contribution to be made by ESD to shaping the purpose, content and quality of all education. The UNESCO strategy will be implemented in line with the International Implementation Scheme (IIS) which, along with the Bonn Declaration, will provide the global strategic framework for UNESCO and its DESD partners during the second half of the Decade. The overall goal is thus to support Member States and other stakeholders in addressing global sustainable development challenges through ESD.

6. The strategy provides a set of focused priorities through which UNESCO will put knowledge into action and promote the further integration of ESD into all types and settings of education at all levels. UNESCO will seek to create an enabling environment for promoting ESD and will undertake capacity-building necessary for Member States and other stakeholders/partners to achieve the goals of the DESD, thereby also contributing to the fulfilment of the Education for All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

7. UNESCO will focus its efforts for the second half of the DESD on four key areas of strategic action:

1. Enhancing synergies with different education and development initiatives (EFA, MDGs, UNLD, EDUCAIDS) and strengthening partnerships among ESD stakeholders;
2. Developing and strengthening capacities for ESD;
3. Building, sharing and applying ESD-related knowledge;
4. Advocating for ESD, and increasing awareness and understanding of sustainability.

8. In each area of strategic action, UNESCO will strive to stimulate fresh initiatives, promote new forms of cooperation and boost the spread of good practices in ESD. Throughout the strategy, special emphasis will be placed on gender and youth. Regarding gender, particular emphasis will be placed on identifying and disseminating effective policies and practices on ESD that are gender-sensitive and supportive of gender equality. Regarding youth, UNESCO will foster initiatives and partnerships that open up spaces for identifying, testing and implementing youth-led ideas and innovative approaches, in collaboration with a variety of international, regional and local youth and student organizations.

A. Enhancing synergies with different education and development initiatives

9. Achieving sustainable development requires a global change of mindsets, beliefs and behaviours, and education is vital to this task. Furthermore, sustainable development requires the building of partnerships at all levels – local, national, regional and global – and this certainly applies to education where creating synergies between different education initiatives and harnessing the expertise existing within United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are essential. Moreover, ESD has a demonstrable relevance to the wider development agenda, particularly the MDGs. The integrated and systemic approach adopted by ESD is especially well suited to creating and enhancing such synergies.

10. In line with its role as a promoter of international cooperation, UNESCO will:

- (a) strengthen its leadership and coordination role for the DESD, in cooperation with other United Nations entities such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UN-Habitat, United Nations University (UNU) and the Education for All convening agencies (among others), through further enhancing the United Nations system's engagement with ESD and the DESD, as well as by incorporating ESD into "delivering as one" United Nations strategies at country level, particularly through UNDAF processes;
- (b) continue and further extend dialogue with governments and other key stakeholders (in particular from civil society, the media and the private sector) in order to facilitate global and regional partnerships and South-South and North-South-South cooperation within the Decade, particularly with a view to enhancing the linkages between ESD and EFA, with the United Nations Literacy Decade, Global Initiative on Education and HIV & AIDS and other major education initiatives, and with Millennium Development Goal-related processes;
- (c) further integrate ESD into UNESCO programming processes through the Intersectoral Platform on ESD as well as through UNESCO's involvement in and follow up to key international conventions, for example, those focusing on biodiversity, climate change, desertification and cultural heritage. In particular, UNESCO will promote ESD as the best framework for addressing climate change issues through education.

B. Developing and strengthening capacities for ESD

11. Reorienting education to integrate sustainable development principles, values and practices must take place not only in formal education institutions but also in many other learning processes and social settings. Moreover, although creating an education that empowers people to address important sustainable development challenges is a multi-stakeholder endeavour – a task for the whole society – the primary responsibility rests with government. To support this task, UNESCO recognizes that suitable policies and well-designed programmes must be put in place. Reinforcing the abilities, competencies and professional knowledge of teachers and educators as well as promoting a culture of monitoring and evaluation are critical elements in this regard.

12. In line with its role as a capacity-builder, UNESCO will thus:

- (a) support Member States and other partners in implementing the DESD, particularly through upstream capacity-building and policy advice on the development of coherent national ESD strategies, the incorporation of ESD in education plans, programmes and curricula, and the planning of M&E. Greater intersectoral and inter-ministerial collaboration will be encouraged;
- (b) support Member States to reorient teacher education and training programmes towards sustainability, in particular through developing teaching support tools, mobilizing

teacher networks, and identifying and sharing innovative ESD teaching and learning approaches; and

- (c) assist Member States in the further development of monitoring and evaluation frameworks, tools and indicators to assess ESD progress and regularly provide information on DESD implementation and follow-up to the Bonn Declaration.

C. Building, sharing and applying ESD-related knowledge

13. Knowledge is an essential component of education for sustainable development. Promoting research, supporting the development of scientific understanding, and sharing and disseminating the vast amount of available knowledge, including traditional and indigenous knowledge, are central activities within the DESD. UNESCO will support the development of national research agendas and assist in building the capacity of higher education institutions to engage in ESD-related research and innovation.

14. In line with its role as a laboratory of ideas, UNESCO will:

- (a) promote ESD-related research through UNESCO's programmes, institutes and networks in order to generate knowledge, share new approaches and enhance evidence-based policy dialogue, in particular by identifying and supporting research institutions that could serve as centres of expertise and innovation in ESD, and by establishing a pool of experts and resource persons, drawing from National Commissions, higher education institutions and non-governmental organizations;
- (b) strengthen its performance as a clearing house by collecting information on ESD programmes, innovations, good practices and materials, and by disseminating such information through ICT tools and other means;
- (c) mobilize and make full use of the expertise that exists within UNESCO's programme sectors and its networks (e.g. UNESCO Chairs in ESD) with a view to not only building and sharing knowledge but also applying it in concrete ways; the Teacher Training Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa (TTISSA), ASPnet schools, the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE), Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage sites will make significant contributions to ESD and the Decade.

D. Advocating for ESD, and increasing awareness and understanding of sustainability

15. The success of the Decade rests on formulating and sharing a common vision of ESD and on mobilizing support for the DESD in both general and targeted ways. Civil society, the media and the private sector are vital partners for achieving large-scale mobilization. Increasing the visibility and improving the profile of ESD, especially aiming at educators, policy-makers and young people, are needed to ensure that the sustainable development agenda becomes better known and more widely accepted.

16. In line with its role as a clearing house, guided by its task manager responsibilities for Chapter 36 (Promoting Education, Public Awareness & Training) of Agenda 21 and building on the revised DESD Communication Strategy, UNESCO will:

- (a) Strengthen its lobbying/advocacy role to increase the visibility of the Decade through a multi-faceted communication approach (including goodwill ambassadors, awards, awareness campaigns, media clips, etc.) to enhance public outreach, awareness and mobilization in support of ESD and the DESD.
- (b) Develop advocacy resource tools to highlight ESD's relevance and importance and to advocate for the mobilization of adequate resources and funding in favour of ESD.

- (c) Intensify its efforts and initiatives to put ESD higher on the international agenda through promoting the DESD and highlighting the relevance and importance of education and training for sustainable development in major education and development forums such as international conferences and processes, including the G8, the G20, CSD, the EFA High-Level Group, the E-9 initiative, the United Nations Chief Executives Board, the Davos Forum and United Nations world conferences (notably the December 2009 United Nations Summit on Climate Change (COP 15) in Copenhagen, Denmark).

Finalization of the strategy for the second half of the DESD

17. The process of finalizing the strategy will involve further internal and external consultations through electronic communications, expert meetings and networks, upcoming UNESCO conferences (e.g. CONFINTEA VI) and other events.

18. To ensure better engagement with and ownership of the strategy, it is important that UNESCO adapt its global strategy to regional contexts. Regional specificities, challenges and priorities will therefore be taken into account. Furthermore, a global timeline will be developed highlighting the major benchmarks from 2009 until the end of the Decade.

19. The full-fledged and detailed strategy for the second half of the DESD will be submitted to the 184th session of the Executive Board. It will then be presented, along with the mid-term progress report on the implementation of the Decade (as requested by United Nations General Assembly Resolution 59/237), to the United Nations General Assembly at its 65th session in autumn 2010.