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UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development Conference Report by the General Rapporteur Heila Lotz-Sisitka, Professor, Rhodes University

1. Conference Objectives and Programme

Under the banner of 'Learning Today for a Sustainable Future', the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (WCESD), hosted in Aichi-Nagoya, from 10–12 November 2014, marked and celebrated the end of the United Nations (UN) Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005–2014). It also saw the launch of the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development and adoption of the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration. The DESD was established out of an agreement amongst Member States to strengthen the role of education in achieving sustainable development at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. Through the adoption of Resolution 57/254 in 2002, the UN General Assembly declared the DESD, to take place from 2005 to 2014, and tasked UNESCO as the lead agency. The WCESD, organized at the end of the DESD by UNESCO and the Government of Japan, provided an important opportunity to consolidate the outcomes of the DESD, and to frame the way forward for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) at global level.

➤ **Participants**

The WCESD was hosted with the highest level of hospitality being offered to conference delegates by the Government and people of Japan. The conference was well attended by 1,100 delegates from 153 countries, including 76 ministerial level representatives. The conference brought together major education and training institutions such as ministries with responsibility for ESD (both Basic Education and Higher Education Ministries), and major international organizations involved in education and ESD. Additionally, the conference brought together global and national NGOs and social movements, as well as major ESD networks such as the ASPnet Schools, youth leaders, higher education and teacher education delegations attending the pre- and post-conference meetings.ⁱ

➤ **Conference programme**

The programme of the conference was organized through 28 plenary and plenary panel presentations, a high level roundtable, 34 workshops structured into four clusters, 24 side events, ESD project exhibitions, as well as exhibitions by Member States, UN agencies and other stakeholders, and an Aichi-Nagoya Hospitality Exhibition. This range of interaction at the conference provided a richly textured and reflective engagement with ESD across the three days of the conference. Interaction and dialogue was focused around the four key thematic areas and objectives of the conference:

1. Celebrating a Decade of Action (Day 1 programme)
2. Reorienting Education to Build a Better Future for All (Day 2 programme)
3. Accelerating Action for Sustainable Development (Day 2 programme)
4. Setting the Agenda for ESD beyond 2014 (Day 3 programme)

➤ **Setting the stage: Opening Plenary**

The Opening Plenary set the tone for the conference, framing ESD not as a technical intervention, but a critically important *social process* necessary for responding to the ever present and increasing challenges of the early 21st century; ensuring a good life for all; and for facilitating real empowerment and social transformation towards a more sustainable, just world order. Recognizing that ESD cannot be seen as an ‘event’ that can be limited to a period of one decade, Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, stated, *“This conference marking the end of the UN DESD is the culmination of a journey and the start of a new one.”* She spoke about the ‘spirit of ESD’ and saw the WCESD as *“a call to action”*.

His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan indicated his pleasure at hosting the end of the DESD conference in Japan. He suggested that in the face of contemporary challenges all human societies need to undertake three tasks for their children: protect the earth, treasure the earth’s resources, and pursue sustainable development. He remarked: *“For this we need knowledge, wisdom and we need to unify our capabilities ... we should recall that each one of us exists relative to others and to the future generations and environment”*. His wise words brought home the message that sustainability involves a new way of seeing the world and that education must be the bedrock of sustainability. Following, Hakubun Shimomura, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan, announced the establishment of the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD, which will reward outstanding ESD work by individuals or organizations for the initial five-year phase of the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019).

In video messages, Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the UN, highlighted that *“Sustainability is the only way we can protect our precious climate and planet; there is no Plan B, for there is no Planet B”*, and Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), suggested that inter-sectoral collaboration was vital to sustainable development, and reminded the conference that education is not just about knowledge, it is also about empowerment. Her Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Hasnaa from Morocco, in her keynote address in the opening plenary, carried forward the messages of the opening plenary. She re-emphasised the continued relevance of ESD and adopting a people-centred approach to envisioning ESD, stating, *“ESD is about key values; it must put the citizen at the heart of sustainable development”*.

Over the three days of the conference, discussions were centred on the four conference themes. Out of this key outcomes were attained, and a clear vision and direction was set for the future of ESD that aligns well with the Global Action Programme on ESD.

2. Main Outcomes

The conference resulted in three main outcomes:

➤ **Launch of the final report on the DESD ‘Shaping the Future We Want’**

Launched in the opening plenary of the conference, the final report on the DESD ‘Shaping the Future We Want’ underlined the importance of ESD as an essential enabler of sustainable development and an integral element of quality education. A short video clip and presentation on the reportⁱⁱ highlighted the progress achieved during 10 years of dedicated commitment. Over the course of the decade, ESD has been included in policies, and in curricula at all levels of education: primary, secondary, TVET, Higher Education and public education. ESD frameworks and tools have been tested. Networks have been established. Capacity has been developed. The 10 key findings from the report also highlight remaining challenges and provide a basis for what is to

follow. Strong political leadership is instrumental in advancing ESD. This is one of the most significant lessons learned during the Decade, which was picked up during the high-level round table debate, *'How to enhance policy support for Education for Sustainable Development'*. As the report states, *"Leadership is essential for moving from policy commitments and demonstration projects to full implementation across the curriculum, teaching and operations, whether in formal systems or in non-formal learning and public awareness raising"*. Further deliberations on future action and directions for ESD – during the WCESD and the associated Stakeholder Meetings in Okayama – made clear that stakeholders agree with the recommendation of the report: While much has been achieved during the DESD, *"much more still needs to be done"*.

➤ ***Adoption of the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on ESD***

The final plenary saw the unanimous adoption of the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on ESD, calling for urgent action to mainstream ESD and to include ESD in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The Declaration re-affirms UNESCO's role as lead agency for ESD and calls upon on all countries to implement the GAP.

It also highlights a number of crucial areas for taking the ESD agenda forward, including the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration amongst UN and other organizations, and the need to adopt an integrative view of environment-society-economy relations in ESD thinking and praxis. It calls on governments to *review the purposes of education, the values that underpin education, and the extent to which current education models are achieving the goals of ESD*. In doing so, it emphasises the important role that ESD has to play in building quality education for all, and ensuring educational relevance in contemporary times. It foregrounds and re-emphasises the importance of mainstreaming ESD into all levels and phases of the education and training system, and of integrating ESD into public and community education, youth development and inter-generational learning. In sum, the Declaration sets a comprehensive agenda for ESD that is aligned with the most recent international policy directions and critical concerns.

The Declaration was elaborated during the WCESD by dedicated representatives from all world regions, also taking into account the deliberations of the Stakeholder Meetings in Okayama.

➤ ***Launch of the Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD, with 360 registered commitments***

The final plenary of the WCESD saw the launch of the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP), the official UNESCO follow up to the DESD.ⁱⁱⁱ The GAP focuses on generating and multiplying ESD action across the world and will make a concrete contribution to the post-2015 agenda. The Programme has two objectives: 1) to reorient education and learning so that everyone has the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that empower them to contribute to sustainable development – and make a difference; and 2) to strengthen education and learning in all agendas, programmes and activities that promote sustainable development. It proposes to take the achievements of the DESD forward by focusing on the following five Priority Action Areas:

- 1) Advancing policy;
- 2) Transforming learning and training environments (whole institution approaches);
- 3) Building capacities of educators and trainers;
- 4) Empowering and mobilizing youth;
- 5) Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level.

To support the implementation of the GAP, all stakeholders were invited to contribute to the five Priority Action Areas. Prior to the WCESD, stakeholders were called upon to commit to concrete

activities to support the GAP. The GAP was launched with 360 commitments from 80 countries. One commitment per Priority Action Area was presented during the final plenary of the conference, including commitments from the Ministry of Education, Kenya, a project on sustainable communities in Namibia, a teacher education programme in Jordan, the Province of Manitoba's commitment to support a whole-school approach in its schools, and a youth programme of the Earth Charter Institute in Costa Rica. An invitation was extended to all conference delegates to make further GAP commitments. The final plenary of the conference stressed the GAP's power and potential to consolidate and upgrade self-driven ESD actions through mobilizing diverse partnerships and networks around the five Priority Action Areas across sectoral, disciplinary and geographic boundaries.

In the closing plenary, following the adoption of the Declaration, Qian Tang, Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO, stressed, *"We were able to share successful initiatives from all over the world, to help government representatives and other key stakeholders formulate new goals and objectives. We have shaped these into a Roadmap for ESD that will implement the Global Action Programme"*. Japan's State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Hideki Niwa added, *"ESD will not end with the last year of the Decade of ESD. Instead let us recharge our efforts for ESD with even greater commitment, making the most of the experiences we have gained so far."*

3. Synthesis and Analysis of Discussions and Key Points

1) Celebrating a Decade of Action

"What have we achieved, what are the lessons learnt?"

The World Conference carried out a stock-taking of the implementation of the DESD and celebrated the Decade's achievements. The UNESCO 2014 report 'Shaping the Future We Want' was a key means of enabling reflection on the outcomes of the DESD. Impacts of the Decade were also visible in a myriad of presentations, exhibitions, side events and commitments made by delegates at the WCESD. What stood out, however, is the **multi-sectoral stakeholder engagement** that has been catalyzed by the Decade, involving a range of diverse education and social institutions concerned with educational transformation. The profile of conference participants, as well as reports from the workshops show that major educational partners have been brought together in new partnership formations and networks around ESD objectives. One such major network that was well represented at the conference is the global Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) network initiated by the United Nations University, and another is the international Eco-Schools network involving over 14 million students and 1.2 million teachers in 58 countries around the world. Various university and sustainability networks such as the Copernicus Alliance, ProSPER.Net and Africa's MESA network also came together at the WCESD to discuss the important role of higher education in enabling a sustainable future. Substantial international networks such as ICLEI joined in with ESD communities to discuss ESD in cities. Smaller and more informal networks such as India's Centre for Environment Education's 'Handprints for action' network also met and deliberated their progress in supporting practical action for sustainability in one of the side events.

There was also rich discussion on the **successes and challenges** experienced in relation to the impacts. The high-level round table highlighted some of the success factors:

- *"Capacity for sub-regional networking and collaboration has helped with adoption of ESD at regional level"*
- *"adopting a contextualized perspective on ESD is a critical success factor"*

- *“multi-institutional partnership approaches that link universities, schools, civic and public sector institutions works well”*
- The presence of a national structure (e.g. national committee for ESD) to champion ESD policy making, working with both medium term and long term policy frameworks for ESD, and emphasizing curriculum development for ESD and cross sectoral collaboration have facilitated successful ESD policy development

Discussion on the challenges clearly showed that much more still needs to be done:

- *“There is need for more political will”,* and further need to strengthen the relationship between development policies and educational policies
- Further need to *“institutionalize ESD very deeply”* into education systems at all levels, and provide for *“adequate funding”* for ESD
- More expansive and systematic forms of monitoring and evaluation research are needed to understand progress with ESD more fully
- More needs to be done to bridge the gap between schools and civil society
- Capacity building for teachers and educators more broadly is needed so that they can *“confidently engage themselves with ESD”*

In the high level roundtable, there was also reflection on the question ‘*Why has ESD been adopted by some countries but not by others?*’ Responses to this question suggested that availability of resources and capacity for ESD influences a country’s abilities to develop strength with ESD. There was also reflection on the difficulties experienced in national education systems to bring diverse priorities (e.g. access, quality, ESD) together at a systemic level with policy coherence. It was suggested that clearer guidelines on how to do this are needed for education systems, and that UNESCO and other international organizations should work together to do this so that countries can respond coherently to the many demands for educational and social change. Here it was noted, for example, that ESD should not be seen as ‘another add on’ and that the concurrent introduction of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) should align with existing commitments to ESD, to ensure coherence in the transformation of education systems in relation to societal priorities. It was also pointed out by workshop participants, *“There is need for top down policies to be better aligned with, and conducive to, bottom up innovation”*.

Despite these challenges facing the adoption of ESD, overall it was agreed that the DESD had established a qualitatively new direction for education which was re-orienting the purpose, values and direction of education systems worldwide. Reflections in the third plenary on ‘education as a game changer’ indicated that *“education on its own is not enough ... we must integrate education with sustainable lifestyles”*, and be aware that education is but one element of political and social change, albeit an important one. Ensuring quality education for all is a foundation of social transformation, and quality education for all must be inclusive of ESD.

2) Reorienting Education to Build a Better Future for All

“How does ESD reinforce quality education?”

Discussions in the plenaries, workshops and evidence from the exhibitions showed that ESD is a key driving force in making education relevant today, and through this, it is enhancing educational quality. At the high level round table, one Minister said, *“We have focused too much on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of education, now we need to focus on the why”*. This statement raised a number of reflections on how ESD influences **the purpose of education**, and how education is being re-oriented towards a more sustainable future (or not). It also drew various statements of commitment and direction from ministers. For example, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology from

Kenya stated: *“A national strategy is necessary to guide all ESD interventions and provide an enabling context for all stakeholders to participate in and contribute to ESD within a multi-stakeholder approach.”* The Minister of Education from the Sultanate of Oman said *“Policy must be accompanied by support to teachers and educators”*. In workshops, participants also brought the question of purpose to the fore: *“ESD is not an ‘add on’ to fit into an already crowded curriculum, it is a framework to transform the education system”*. They suggested that the core question to be addressed is *“Education for what?”* and they noted with some realism that *“Education systems all over the world have heavy legacies and bureaucracies that need to be challenged before we might achieve sustainable development”*.

Additionally, the plenary discussions, workshops and exhibitions showed that the many facets of **ESD are setting a new direction for quality education and learning for all**. This was evident in the fact that ESD is introducing new knowledge into education and training systems, but more than that it is introducing a strong focus on values and ethics, and on social change and participation in sustainable development actions. There was a strong sentiment amongst conference participants that ESD is, and must be core to ensuring quality education for all. In contributing to quality education for all, there was strong agreement that ESD needs to embrace a **transformative agenda**. For example, workshop participants recommended: *“Encourage out of the box thinking and positive approaches so that people feel engaged to create their futures”*, *“ESD must promote whole systems thinking”* and *“ethics is key to enabling meaningful engagement”*.

Of significance was the manner in which all of the deliberations and discussions shared a commitment to ensuring that **ESD should actively engage all learners in society**. This includes all learners in the education and training system, as well as learners’ communities, learners in workplaces, and in the public sphere. As said by workshop participants, there is need to *“create robust initiatives that meet community needs”* and that this should be done through *“ways of engaging communities that develops trust, respect and relevancy of ESD issues through participatory learning, community-based research and collective problem solving”*. Partnerships with the private sector were also discussed and recommendations for enhancing executive education sustainability programmes were made. It was said that such programmes should offer new paradigms of leadership. Peer-to-peer learning was also highlighted as being an important and successful strategy for ESD.

ESD was also framed as an **inter-generational concern**, involving youth and elders in societies around the world. A book launch in the UNEP side event focusing on *‘Intergenerational leadership and learning for ESD’* drew positive comments, highlighting that ESD requires a wide and creative ‘trend setting’ framework for its success. Across the workshops, almost all groups recommended engaging **youth** in creative actions for sustainability, a typical example of such a recommendation being *“Provide space and time for youth to engage in real world problem solving”*. In this regard, the importance of informal learning settings for ESD was also recognized. Arab Hoballah, Chief of the Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch of UNEP, suggested in the third plenary that *“We must give attention to the use of ICTs and social media, as this is the new medium of the youth and the future”*. He reminded us that in less than two decades we would have an additional two to three billion consumers, led by the current youth who will be leading the world. Thus, we cannot carry on with business as usual, and he suggested *“we must change, we must become the real game changers”*.

The children’s conference presentation in the final plenary showed that **children** too have a voice in setting a new direction for education and learning for the future. It showed that children, if supported by good teachers, could develop in-depth and sophisticated understandings of the

planetary condition, that they could share and show empathy across local and national borders, and that they had capabilities for creative thinking and problem solving which, when applied in local contexts, provided strong mechanisms for inter-generational communication and learning, enhancing the quality of education for all. Participants in the workshop on early childhood care and education underscored the importance of ESD in strengthening children's learning, doing, being and transforming capabilities. They also noted the role of children as change makers: "*ESD should not only focus on solving problems but also on enjoying the environment and creating opportunity for innovation*". For ESD to contribute to quality education, it was also said that "*relationships between schools, parents and communities need to be enhanced, with links to current and future possible livelihoods*". Pedagogies are needed that are "*participatory, practical and interactive*".

It was also agreed that **higher education** has an important role to play not only in educating a new generation of leaders, but also in producing new knowledge for sustainable development in new ways. As said by the Higher Education workshop participants, "*there is need to have sustainability leadership programmes for university leaders so that they can demonstrate the need for change*". New organizational structures for higher education were discussed, with suggestions for 'matrix organizations' and 'transdisciplinary approaches' that allow for engagement with complex challenges involving academia, public and private sectors and communities. **Teacher Education** was also recognized as being a critically important focus for ESD in higher education as it has a pivotal role in enabling the re-orientation of education towards sustainability across levels and phases. Throughout the conference, numerous recommendations were made on how to strengthen teacher education and its role in enhancing ESD and quality education for all. TVET lecturers were singled out as also needing to be engaged in ESD re-orientation so that the **TVET system** could reflect principles and practices of SD and train a new generation of sustainable development vocational professionals, technicians and artisans. Participants in the workshop on TVET emphasized the important role of political leadership: "*Political leadership is essential for encouraging existing TVET systems to adopt ESD principles and to adapt themselves to the changing conditions and the transition to green, low carbon economies*". In all of these education settings, there was a consensus that **students need to be recognized as change agents** with capability to bridge formal learning and societal concerns. This calls for commitment to transformative learning approaches, as was mentioned in many of the workshops.

However, conference reflections, and especially some of those offered in the high level roundtable were also realistic about the conditions that are necessary for ESD and SD to flourish. As stated by one minister: "*Sustainable development is only possible in a world without war*". Ministers emphasised the importance of appropriate international community responses to some of the more complex and critical global issues (e.g. persistent poverty, conflicts, economic decline). There was agreement that without freedom from poverty, peace and basic human rights, it is difficult to establish the basic conditions for ESD. As one minister noted at the high-level round table, "*When levels of vulnerability are high and associated capacity to respond is low, there is need for strong forms of collaboration and support*".

3) Accelerating Action for Sustainable Development

"How are sustainability challenges addressed through ESD?"

Across all conference deliberations, there was clear agreement on the important role of ESD in contributing to sustainable development, as succinctly also pointed out by the Minister of Education from Samoa: "*Government has recognized the importance of sustainable development issues such as climate change, biodiversity, disaster risk reduction, and sustainable consumption and production; this must be met with the provision of quality education*".

ESD was seen by all at the conference to be an important '**social mobilization**' force for change since it helps people to gain new knowledge and understanding of the world and its contemporary challenges, and to develop the ethics and values that motivate and shape change towards a more sustainable future. Additionally ESD offers opportunities for developing action-oriented competences, as well as competences such as critical thinking, futures thinking, problem solving and creative thinking. ESD also helps to build collective competence amongst groups of people who can drive change processes at local or wider levels. In workshops on community learning (Cluster II-6) and cities (Cluster III-11) community learning centres (CLCs) and cities were highlighted as important sites for sustainable learning and change, and it was agreed that cities and local governments can potentially provide sustainable urban centres where ESD could be integrated with sustainable development practices on the ground.

The WCESD showed evidence of a diverse range of contributions from ESD to mobilization and action towards sustainability. The many exhibitions and materials shared at the conference showed that all over the world people are developing new, more sustainable technologies, and community relationships, and new sustainability practices, and various ESD processes are 'driving' many of these changes. Some of the key roles for ESD in the drive towards sustainable development identified in the conference include:

- Increasing and expanding knowledge and awareness, values, concern and innovation capability;
- Changing behaviour, expanding citizen participation and transforming collective social practices; enhancing global citizenship and local citizenship simultaneously and build new communities; and
- Enabling people to mitigate and adapt to new social and environmental conditions such as climate change; strengthen social justice, peace and security; and prevent further degradation of social-ecological systems and societal structures.

The conference also highlighted that making ESD contributions to sustainable development was not a static process, but was dynamic, and needed ongoing engagement within the processes of **transitioning to green economies and societies**. In particular, the role of ESD in this regard was identified as: (1) making a contribution to micro-level social changes towards green economies and societies (e.g. more sustainable lifestyles and practices); (2) making a contribution at meso-level social changes towards green economies and societies (e.g. through green campuses and eco schools, especially within a whole-institution contexts; supporting local social movements e.g. women's/indigenous people's sustainability groups and their sustainable development objectives); and (3) making a contribution to macro-level social changes necessary for transitioning to green economies and societies (e.g. education sector policy changes; environmental and/or sustainable development related policy changes; technology systems changes; education system changes etc.). In the transition to green economies, it was recognized that TVET programmes, and their alignment with community needs and new economic opportunities are crucial. The development and use of ICT was also emphasized, as this provided tools for wide knowledge exchange, and fast tracking thinking about local options and opportunities through comparative engagement and drawing on knowledge from other parts of the world. This raised the question of integrating digital literacy into ESD programmes and activities.

Another key role identified for ESD is its contribution in serving as a catalyst for **cross-sector planning and implementation** of programmes in areas such as climate change, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction. A number of significant initiatives were 'showcased' both in the workshops and also in the exhibitions and plenary sessions. The workshops also provided guidance for

facilitating cross-sectoral programme interaction. For example, the world heritage and arts education workshop (Cluster II) suggested that ESD can mediate a closer relationship between culture and sustainability, as “*with better understanding of culture, there will be better opportunities to make clear sustainable connections with community, environmental and social historical contexts*”. The workshops on water and energy (Cluster III) suggested that ESD had played a great role in making water and energy issues more known, but that more can be done for higher education institutions, schools and other societal institutions to become successful examples of water and energy management. The workshops on health, food security, climate change, biodiversity and disaster risk reduction all recommended that such concerns be integrated into teacher education, and that sustainability be ‘practiced’ and learned via demonstration and engagement with communities and relevant institutions so that the transitions to sustainability can be ‘seen and experienced’ in community contexts at grassroots level. In deliberating the relationship between key sustainable development issues, ESD and transformative practice, there was also agreement that education initiatives should “*take into account peoples’ local/indigenous knowledge*”. Exhibitions showcased examples which show that it is possible to put these recommendations into action. For example, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Regional Environmental Education Programme exhibition showed that this ESD programme involving thousands of ESD practitioners across 14 SADC Member states has facilitated cross border ESD policy making, professional development and learning for climate change responses, biodiversity, food security, water and social-ecological systems management within a framework of poverty reduction and sustainable development. This programme has actively facilitated not only cross border networking and policy making, but also the realization of changed practices at a grassroots level through use of a ‘change project’ model in all of its ESD activities.

Discussions also showed that ESD can help move **sustainable development policy and action forward to meet different global, regional, national, and local needs**. Workshops highlighted the role of ESD in the main multilateral agreements such as those on biodiversity and climate change, and the relationship between ESD and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, participants in the biodiversity workshop (Cluster III) reported, “*there is need to understand that biodiversity is not a problem to be solved, but is part of the solution to the other challenges that the SDGs will be addressing ... ESD approaches related to biodiversity should focus on all related issues and to sustainable development and human well-being*”. It was suggested that ESD must be a strong focus of the SDGs on biodiversity, and engage people in taking actions on biodiversity issues and challenges. ESD was also recognized as being key to achieving mitigation and adaption goals in response to climate change. Recommendations in this regard suggested that “*ESD should not focus on teaching theoretical scientific information on climate change only, but it should also focus on participatory, locally-relevant and competency-based learning aimed at developing skills needed for transition to low-emission climate resilient economies and societies*”. From a disaster risk reduction (DRR) perspective, it was acknowledged that youth can potentially be “*effective drivers for community resilience as they can potentially take leading roles in disaster drills, risk mapping and analysis, and delivering DRR education to children*”. ESD is also critical for achieving the goals of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). The WCESD saw the launch of the Sustainable Lifestyles and Education programme of the 10YFP. The SCP workshop called for integrating SCP concerns into all ESD and education programmes and highlighted the important role of the media in educating the wider public on ways of reducing consumption and adopting more sustainable lifestyles.

Challenging conference delegates to ‘think out of the box’, during the third plenary, Hans van Ginkel, former Rector of the United Nations University (UNU) and founder of the global RCE

movement, said, *“If we really want to change things, we have to go into areas we don’t (yet) know. We have to think about new knowledge, new ideas and new approaches, in relation to both: education and sustainable development ... The school gives structure to what we learn together, but we must instil in people the urge to look further, to learn more, to reach further.”* Overall, plenary and workshop deliberations confirmed that ESD is critical for the achievement of SDGs and other multilateral agreements. In particular ESD has a role to play in fostering local action-based learning and change through expansive action learning approaches that also contribute to sustainability solutions at local levels and in community contexts.

4) Setting the Agenda for ESD beyond 2014

“What are the strategies for our common future?”

With the target date of the Millennium Development Goals and the Education for All objectives approaching in 2015, and two years after the Rio+20 conference, the WCESD highlighted the crucial role ESD can play for the next set of global education and development goals. This is captured in the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration as follows *“Reflect and strengthen ESD in the post-2015 agenda and its follow up processes, ensuring, first, that ESD is maintained as a target in the education goal, and also integrated into SDGs as a cross cutting theme”* (UNESCO, 2014).

Conference delegates were clear that ESD can, and must, make concrete contributions to the post-2015 agenda. Various suggestions were put forward which include, but are not limited to, ESD should be integrated into targets for achieving the SDGs^{iv} on climate change (goal 13), biodiversity and ecosystems (goal 15), oceans and seas (goal 14), and SCP (goal 12). ESD should also be integrated into goals focusing on poverty alleviation (goal 1), nutrition (goal 2), health and well-being (goal 3), gender equality and empowerment (goal 5), water and energy sustainability (goals 5 and 6), economic growth (goals 8 and 9), urban development (goal 11). **Education and ESD should ideally be seen as a cross-cutting enabling mechanism for achievement of all of the SDGs.** As pointed out in the workshop focusing on the SDGs (Cluster IV-3), *“there is need for transformative leadership to bring out synergies through pragmatic approaches to overcome hierarchies and silos”*. Additionally and importantly, it was noted that, while ensuring access to education is a foundational condition for development, such education *should also be adequately oriented towards sustainability*. In this regard, Rosa Otunbayeva, Former President of Kyrgyzstan said in the third plenary, *“ESD will last the rest of the 90 years of this century. We are laying the foundation for a new mindset”*. The WCESD also showed that ESD practitioners are engaging actively with the processes and practices of developing global citizenship education to transform the purpose and focus of education. Workshop participants recommended, for example, to *“use global citizenship as a rallying concept for youth to address the SDGs directly”*.

In order to fully appreciate and understand the important role of ESD in the post-2015 education and development agendas, there is need for **system wide monitoring and evaluation tools for ESD** that can be used in development sectors, as well as the education sector. The high level round table together with a number of the workshop groups emphasized the need for high quality and effective monitoring and evaluation tools to track the changes and impacts of ESD to inform policy making and practice. Ministers in the high level round table emphasised that this should include a focus on both data and data processing systems and capacity. It was noted in workshop deliberations that *“responsibility and leadership for evaluation is required at all levels (global, regional, national, local)”*. There was also discussion on indicators and while there was agreement that wider monitoring frameworks are needed, there should also be room for indicators to be defined in ways that are contextually and culturally relevant. It was suggested that national targets could be set for the GAP and workshop participants also recommended that to measure across

sectors “*qualitative and non-standardized measures are needed*”, and that there is also a need to move away from “*measuring about*” to “*measuring with us*”. There is also a need to measure effectiveness, not only activity.

Key strategies for expanding the impact of ESD identified during the WCESD are summarized below according to the five Priority Action Areas of the GAP.

➤ ***Priority Action Area 1: Advancing policy***

For ESD to make a substantive contribution to the post 2015 agenda, there is need for **mainstreaming ESD** into sectoral programmes and national strategies for education and development. This was proposed by, and supported by the Ministerial delegations in the high level round table. Related to this, the ministerial delegations, together with many other groups in the conference also recommended **expanded and system wide training and professional development of teachers and educators** that have responsibility for mainstreaming ESD. It was also recommended that ESD be integrated into **quality criteria, and assessment and examination systems**. Delegates also cautioned that curriculum changes on their own are not adequate for mainstreaming, and curriculum change should be accompanied by teacher education and learning materials and should use an approach that sees ESD as integral to all subjects, disciplines, types of education and levels of education and training within a life-long learning framework. Ministers and a wider range of conference delegates also proposed that renewed attention be given to ensuring **adequate financing for ESD** at national and international levels.

➤ ***Priority Action Area 2: Transforming learning and training environments***

There was agreement across many of the workshop recommendations and plenary sessions that formal and non-formal education and training institutions should promote whole-institution approaches to ESD at all levels—early childhood, secondary, and tertiary—and in all types of education. Schools, higher education and TVET institutions should develop school/institutional sustainability plans in partnership with the broader community, implement actions to reduce ecological footprints of the school/institution, and develop learning environments that empower students to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to shape more sustainable societies. Public sector, private sector and civil society organizations also have a key role to play in developing organizational sustainability plans which include ESD, and ESD training for staff.

➤ ***Priority Action Area 3: Building capacities of educators and trainers***

A key concern across the WCESD was the expansion of teacher education for ESD (in schools, colleges and universities). It was generally agreed that national governments should introduce and/or enhance ESD in pre-service and in-service education and training for early childhood, primary and secondary school teachers and TVET instructors and trainers. There was also agreement that higher education institutions (in all disciplines) should include ESD in faculty orientation and training programmes, research agendas and curriculum transformation programmes. One important strategy identified by the Teacher Education workshop is to “*provide ESD professional development support to teacher educators*”. There was also a consensus that the focus on formal institutions of learning is not enough. Across the conference there were deliberations on the role of government, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders who have a role to play in building capacity of non-formal education instructors and trainers in addressing ESD and public sector, private sector and civil society organizations who could and should align in-house training programmes with ESD.

➤ ***Priority Action Area 4: Empowering and mobilizing youth***

The DESD was recognized as having established an emerging youth movement that is committed to ESD. The importance of youth engagement with ESD was foregrounded across the WCESD deliberations. The **role of youth** in setting a new direction for education and learning for all was also brought to the fore via a youth delegation, who represented the agreements reached at the ESD Youth Conference preceding the WCESD. Key points that they introduced into the main WCESD was the need for “*intergenerational respect and recognition*” and real opportunities for participation in sustainable development. A key strategic recommendation was not to treat youth as a marginal or special group but to recognize young people for their creativity and power as contemporary change agents in the GAP framework. Importantly, the youth conference suggested that “*youth-to-youth empowerment initiatives have the potential to be bold and creative in the way they tell stories and mobilize others*”, and there was a request from the ESD youth leaders for youth to be supported in “*developing daring, radical and challenging visions of a more sustainable world in order to provide the inspiration and rationales for youth-led sustainability efforts*” (ESD Youth conference statement). There was also agreement on the important role of the public sector, private sector and civil society organizations to create or enhance learner-centred non-formal and informal learning opportunities in ESD for youth, through social media, e-learning and mobile learning opportunities. New networks and partnerships were also launched during the WCESD, such as the YesPeace (Youth Environment, Sustainability and Peace) programme and network being led by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) in India.

➤ **Priority Action Area 5: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level**

As recommended by workshop participants “*We need to work with local authorities and municipalities, rural and urban communities to build sustainable communities ... We need to scale up actions and build bridges through lifelong learning, including nonformal, informal and formal ESD knowledge, skills, values and practices*”. Community learning centres (CLCs) were named as being critically important for building the links between more formal educational interventions and communities and societies. An example was given of the CLCs or Kominkan in the City of Okayama, where CLCs had actively helped communities to develop better places for living, face various challenges, increase learning and practices relevant to sustainable development, and strengthen community-oriented sustainable development relationships. Such centres also allowed for cross generational input and participation in sustainable development actions. Cities were also suggested as important sites for ESD related sustainable learning and change, and it was agreed that cities and local governments can potentially provide sustainable urban centres where integrated learning approaches to sustainable development could be integrated with actual sustainable development practices.

4. Conclusion and Next Steps

In a world of 7 billion people, with limited natural resources, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, ongoing ecological degradation, escalating risk and persistent inequalities, the need for holistic, transformational education systems is urgent. It is now widely recognized that simply ensuring access to education is an insufficient objective; the content and purpose of education is a vital concern that must be taken forward on all fronts. As stated in the high level roundtable at the WCESD, “*There is a need to recognize that unsustainable patterns affect people globally (e.g. climate change, poverty, natural resource depletion etc.); thus there is a need to address challenges collectively if we are to meet future generations needs. ... Transformative leadership is needed on all fronts and at all levels ... We need a system wide concept of, and catalyst for change, involving harmonization of policies*”.

In concluding the conference, there was agreement on the following next steps.

- **The outcomes of the Conference should feed into the post-2015 education Framework for Action, to be submitted to the World Education Forum in Incheon, Korea, in May 2015, as well as the overall post-2015 sustainable development agenda**

The outcomes of the DESD and the WCESD show that ESD is a key contributor to achieving quality education for all and a key enabler for sustainable development. The messages of the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration and the GAP will be fed into the deliberations of the World Education Forum (19–22 May 2015, Incheon, Republic of Korea). Additionally, as a key enabler for sustainable development, ESD should also be fed into the broader post-2015 sustainable development agenda.

- **The outcomes of the conference should feed into UNFCCC processes, in particular into COP 21 to be held in December 2015 in Paris**

Conference delegates agreed that it was important to continue to foreground ESD in climate change negotiations. Shortly after the WCESD, ministers and heads of delegation attending the UN Climate Change Conference 2014 – UNFCCC COP 20 – (1–12 December 2014, Lima, Peru) adopted The Lima Ministerial Declaration on Education and Awareness-raising. This Declaration calls on governments to include climate change into school curricula and climate awareness into national development and climate change plans. Marcin Korolec, President of COP 19/CMP 9 and Secretary of State, Ministry of the Environment, Poland, said that "*this declaration is an important step towards bringing education back into the spotlight where it belongs*". The Declaration makes explicit reference to the importance of the WCESD, "*which called for urgent action to further strengthen and scale up education for sustainable development*." The Declaration sets the stage for taking the WCESD outcomes into UNFCCC COP 21 in Paris and for promoting the power of ESD for addressing climate change within UNFCCC processes.

- **Ongoing leadership from UNESCO and from all stakeholders needs to be provided to facilitate the GAP implementation**

There was general agreement across the conference that UNESCO should continue to provide leadership for ESD, especially in coordinating the implementation of the GAP. At the same time, there was agreement that all stakeholders have a responsibility for taking forward the GAP. It was repeatedly stressed – including at the high level round table – that UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and other relevant stakeholders should continue to support integrating ESD into global education and sustainable development agendas. Furthermore, governments should integrate ESD into national education and sustainable development policies, and development co-operation agencies should continue to support integrating ESD as a systematic element of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation frameworks. While many stakeholders were already committed to implement and fund their GAP commitments, there was also recognition of the need for additional funding for ESD activities. Mobilizing existing funding mechanisms in education and sustainable development for ESD activities was recognized as potential way forward. Donors were encouraged to consider the compatibility of ESD with existing funding mechanisms and ESD stakeholders were encouraged to fully and systematically use the existing potential of their institutions and capabilities for expanding ESD. Furthermore, the GAP commitments also show that considerable potential exists in the development of new partnerships, including with the private sector. There was also a call for "*innovative finance mechanisms for catalysing both public and private investment in ESD*".

The importance and values of creating and working within multi-stakeholder networks to promote mutual learning and problem solving for sustainable development were stressed during plenaries, workshops and exhibitions. It was said, for example, “*We need to re-think current partnership models ... the process of partnership must be thoroughly explored to ensure better multi-stakeholder engagement in the provision of ESD processes*”. “*ESD should not just be considered the business of education ministries ... it must be at the core of national and global strategies*”. In line with this, it was noted that UNESCO should provide a partnership network and monitoring tools for GAP commitments and ESD more widely.

Expressing the spirit of the WCESD and the GAP, ESD Youth Leaders at the WCESD said, “*Together we stand for a sustainable, resilient and equitable society in which every person in every corner of the world has the opportunity to thrive. We strongly believe that ESD is fundamental to achieving this vision*”. And as stated by Princess Lalla Hasnaa in the first keynote address, “*Each one of us is called upon to make a difference. ESD involves bringing about a change in our cultures and our societies ... it is a challenging task that requires all of our attention*”.

ⁱ The Stakeholder Meetings were held in Okayama, Japan, from 4 to 8 November 2014: UNESCO ASPnet International ESD events, the UNESCO ESD Youth Conference, and the Global Regional Centres of Expertise Conference. The outcome documents of the Stakeholder Meetings can be found here: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/about-the-conference/stakeholder-meetings/>

Additionally, prior to the WCESD, two higher education meetings were held in Nagoya: **Global Universities Partnership on Environment and Sustainability (GUPES) Partnership Forum** on 8 November 2014 and **International Conference on Higher Education for Sustainable Development: Higher Education Beyond 2014** on 9 November 2014. Following the WCESD, the 8th Biennial Meeting of the International Network of Teacher Education Institutions was held on 14–17 November 2014 in Okayama.

ⁱⁱ The five-minute video on ten key findings from the DESD “Shaping the Future We Want” can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQ9ETC8bk70>

ⁱⁱⁱ The Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 37th session (37C/Resolution 12) and acknowledged as follow up to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development by the UN General Assembly in 2014, which requests UNESCO to continue to provide coordination for the implementation of the GAP (Resolution A/RES/69/211).

^{iv} See the proposal by the Open Working Group (OWG) of the UN General Assembly on SDGs. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>