

UNESCO
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Japan

World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development opens in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan

Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, 10 November: UNESCO’s Director-General and Japan’s Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology have opened the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The opening ceremony took place in the presence of Their Imperial Highnesses the Crown Prince and Crown Princess of Japan following stakeholder meetings last week in Okayama.

“To achieve sustainable development, technology, political regulations and financial incentives will not suffice – we need to change the way that we think and act, as individuals and as societies. This is the aim of Education for Sustainable Development,” stated the Director-General, Irina Bokova.

“This is going to be a very important conference, providing an opportunity to review the past decade and to discuss how to promote ESD going forward. I hope the resulting insights will accelerate the promotion of ESD now and in the future, and make a valuable difference to education around the world,” stated Japan’s Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Hakubun Shimomura.

Mr. Shimomura also announced the establishment of the UNESCO-Japan Prize on Education for Sustainable Development. The Prize will enhance the visibility of the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP), which is the follow up to the UN Decade of ESD (2005-2014), by rewarding outstanding work by individuals or organizations for its five-year period (2015-2019). The \$50,000 reward will be awarded annually to three winners who have made outstanding contributions to the promotion of ESD in one or more of the five priority action areas of the GAP.

More than 1,000 participants have gathered under the banner “Learning Today for a Sustainable Future” to celebrate the achievements of the Decade. Among them are 75 ministerial level, Princess Lalla Hasnaa of Morocco - the President of the Mohammed VI Foundation for the Protection of the Environment - and representatives of UNESCO Member States, NGOs, academia, the private sector and UN agencies, as well as individual experts and youth participants.

UNESCO presented the Final Report for the Decade at the Opening Plenary, entitled *Shaping the Future We Want*. It assesses the impact of the Decade on all levels and areas of education and draws out the major lessons that will inform future work. The study was based on questionnaires sent to Member States, UN Agencies and other stakeholders as well as extensive additional research.

The report identifies 10 key findings. Among them is increased global recognition that education is a critical tool for moving societies towards sustainable development. Countries and jurisdictions from Manitoba to Mauritius have made education more relevant to the social, environmental and economic challenges that the world faces now and in the future. The report also finds that two thirds of countries responding to the questionnaire already have a national ESD strategy or plan in place and that half have integrated ESD into relevant policies.

Issues highlighted in the report include the need to align education with sustainable development to ensure that education supports sustainable development objectives, and that sustainable development policymakers provide support for education. Widespread, overt and sustained political support will also be necessary to make the transition from creating an enabling environment to achieving actual changes in curriculum and educator practice at all levels of education. The report calls on governments and other stakeholders to scale up actions towards a more sustainable future.

Following the Opening Plenary, Ms. Bokova and Mr. Shimomura co-chaired a high-level round table on ESD. Over a three-day period, the Conference will host four plenary sessions, 34 workshops, 25 side events and 42 exhibition booths, to provide stakeholders and partners with opportunities to showcase their work, discuss specific ESD issues, and to share successful initiatives from all over the world. At the Closing Plenary on the third day, the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration will be adopted, building on the achievements of the Decade and the deliberations of the Conference and the Stakeholder Meetings which were held last week in Okayama.

The Conference on ESD in Aichi-Nagoya is co-organized by UNESCO and the Government of Japan.

Further information: The World Conference on ESD
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco-world-conference-on-esd-2014/>

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