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UNECE Steering Committee on Education for Sustainable Development

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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

**INTERLINKAGES AND POSSIBLE MUTUAL BENEFITS OF THE UNECE PROCESS
AND OTHER EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
PROCESSES AND ACTIVITIES**

**PROPOSED COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS IN THE UNECE REGION**

Note by the secretariat¹

Introduction

1. Education for sustainable development (ESD) has gained prominence during recent years and many organizations and institutions are carrying out ESD-related activities. Since the Steering Committee's last meeting, a number of international events on ESD have been held in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) region. It is essential to increase cooperation and coordination between all those implementing such activities so as to achieve mutual benefits and synergies and jointly advance ESD implementation. At its last meeting, the Steering Committee decided to support a strengthening of synergies between the UNECE Strategy and ESD-related activities taking place in the framework of the United Nations Decade of ESD, and requested the Bureau and the secretariat to follow-up on its decisions (ECE/CEP/AC.13/2008/2, paras. 33 and 40).

¹ This document was submitted on the above date due to time constraints.

2. This paper proposes a feasible coordination mechanism to enhance cooperation among ESD partners in the UNECE region. Such a coordination mechanism was preliminarily discussed by UNECE, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the proposal below takes into account these discussions. The Steering Committee is invited to consider the proposal.

I. COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES

3. Within the framework of the United Nations Decade of ESD (2005–2014), a variety of ESD partners² are working to promote ESD in the UNECE region. Some of these partners are focusing their work on policy areas, while others are pursuing project-based activities. In addition, the scope of ESD-related activities varies, covering the regional, subregional and national levels as well as specific geographical regions such as the Balkans, the Carpathians, the Caucasus and the Mediterranean. Each of these activities has its own added value. However, communication and cooperation among partners is a prerequisite to the overall success of ESD.

4. The slogan for advancing ESD in the region is “Learning from each other”. While the Steering Committee provides a platform for sharing experiences, good practices and lessons learned in ESD, its two-day meetings are not sufficient for the comprehensive discussion necessary to coordinate ongoing and planned activities among ESD partners.

5. To enhance cooperation and coordination of ESD-related activities, it is proposed to initiate annual coordination meetings for ESD partners active in the region. These would be one- or two-day meetings³ held in Geneva with the participation of ESD partners. The UNECE secretariat, in its capacity of providing the secretariat to the ESD process in the region, would service these meetings. When feasible, the meetings would be organized back-to-back with the Steering Committee’s meetings with a view to reducing travel costs. To more efficiently use time and resources, international events (e.g. the UNESCO World Conference on ESD, the “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conferences and European Union conferences on ESD) attended by the ESD partners should be used as opportunities to organize brief coordination meetings. Communication between meetings could be conducted by e-mail.

6. The objectives of the meetings would be: (a) to present ongoing and planned ESD-related activities and to subsequently consider ways to enhance cooperation; (b) to promote synergies and join efforts in carrying out these activities; and (c) to avoid overlap and duplication. Such synergies would benefit both organizations implementing ESD activities and the countries and stakeholders involved in or benefiting from their implementation. In particular, this coordination would contribute to streamlining and rationalizing capacity-building activities. These meetings would also provide forums for exchanging information and lessons learned among implementing organizations, establishing partnerships and enabling all concerned to maintain an overview of existing and planned ESD projects and initiatives.

² e.g. UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Commission, the European Environment Agency, the Regional Environmental Centres, European ECO-Forum, Environment and School Initiatives and the Mediterranean Information Office for Environment Culture and Sustainable Development.

³ The length of the meeting would be determined in accordance with the meeting agenda.

7. The outcomes of these meetings, e.g. an overview of major ESD activities, would be communicated to member States and other stakeholders through the Steering Committee, and to a broader audience via the UNECE and other ESD partners' websites.

8. The secretariat, provided resources are made available, would contribute by: (a) organizing these meetings and coordinating the inputs of ESD partners; (b) developing and disseminating the overview of activities; and (c) contributing to projects implemented by various partners, e.g. by providing and/or suggesting speakers and experts for ESD activities.

9. An initial proposal is to organize a coordination meeting for ESD partners, if feasible, back-to-back to UNESCO World Conference on ESD (Bonn, Germany, 31 March–2 April 2009) so as to take stock of the various ongoing and planned activities and identify ways to link efforts during the second half of the United Nations Decade of ESD. Alternatively, the meeting could be organized shortly after the Conference, e.g. in May or June 2009.
