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Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to welcome all participants of the Conference and wish a fruitful and creative work. The ecological issues are becoming more and more challenging, thus, the policy making can no longer avoid paying constant attention to these issues and hope that the impact could be neglected. Previously, the ecology was more a domain of a few specialized. Today, it is a knowledge and thus culture that imposes new patterns of behavior for each and every individual. Therefore, the education for sustainable development is to be viewed as an inseparable part of educational content and process, if we want to preserve the Earth and ensure a sustainably high quality of life in a new paradigm. It can be achieved through education only and thus, the latest becomes a powerful tool.

The UN General Conference 2005-2015 has announced a “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”. In 2002-2004, by the initiative of the Committee of Ecological Policy of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) a strategic document on “Education for Sustainable Development” was elaborated and was approved during the Meeting of Ministers of Education and Nature Protection of UNECE’s Member States held in Vilnius in March of 2005. Armenia joined the process and took responsibility for the successful realization of the development of indicators to measure the effectiveness of the Strategy. The representatives from public sector, academic community and civil society participated in the implementation of activities organized within the “Education for Sustainable Development”, the country has implemented pilots. The Educational Programs on Alternative Energy are being successfully implemented in Armenia. “Tapan” NGO has prepared a report, which would be presented in the Conference during the panel discussion.

Coming back to the activities being implemented under the “Education for Sustainable Development”, I would like to state that the Educational system is undergoing reforms aimed at raising the quality and relevance of education. At all levels of Educational system, content pertinent to Sustainable Development is

included through integrated lessons. The learners periodically take part in various educational programs, excursions and camps on ecological themes, environmental measures realized jointly with the Ministry of Nature Protection, different International organizations and Non-governmental organizations.

In 2001, the Law on “Environmental Education of the Population” was adopted. Following this, courses of study on “Ecology” in the middle professional (vocational) and higher professional education institutions were introduced. Currently, the standards have been approved, and the courses on “Ecology” and “The basics of Ecology” are introduced. Besides, in some Educational Institutions courses on “Social ecology”, “Human ecology”, “Industrial ecology”, “Radiation ecology”, “Sustainable Development of Human Society”, “Sustainable Development and Global Security”, “The Aims of Millennium Development as an important basis of sustainable development” are provided. Apart from that, the Dutch experience in providing the course of “Education for Sustainable Development” is being adopted by one of the higher education institutions.

At the postgraduate level, state scholarships are being granted to students who pursue research related to the issues of Sustainable Development. One third of applied research is being financed fro the state budget that deals the main directions of sustainable development. Research projects linked to alternative energy sources, risk factors and human health, biotechnologies has received base funding from the state budget. It is worth mentioning one of the recent applied research carried out by the State Engineering University of Armenia that aims at creating efficient technologies and manufacturing equipments for new and competitive plants production using solar energy.

In 2005 the Inter-Ministerial Coordination Commission, responsible for the development of the strategy on the “Education for Sustainable Development”, has been established with representatives from different Ministries, academia and non-governmental organizations. Currently, the UNECE Strategy for ESD and the relevant documents have been translated into the national language. The Action Plan of the “Education for Sustainable Development” has been developed by the initiative of the representatives of NGOs, Universities and Scientific sector of the Republic. It will serve as the basis for development of the national strategy document on “Education for Sustainable Development”. Finally, in the Conference Halls you will

get the chance to see all the activities implemented and the results generated under the framework of a “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” in partnership various stakeholders.

Coming to close, I would like to present to your attention the special needs of the Republic of Armenia in frames of “Education for Sustainable Development” that could be included in the fundamental document to be presented at the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Ministers of Education and Nature Protection of the region states of UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) to be held in the framework of the procedure “Environment for Europe”. One of the most important areas is the expansion of the research capacities that is relevant to the “Education for Sustainable Development”, as well as the encouragement for different partners to join their efforts in some kind of consortia aimed at developing and implementing joint scientific projects, sharing experiences, as well as providing short-term trainings. Another area of interest is the educational e-content that would ensure the exponential advancement of the ideas and good examples pertinent to the global issues on “Education for Sustainable Development” in this ICT-savvy world and induce the desired behavioral changes without which there could be no future on Planet Earth as it was enjoyed until now.