

Statement of Italy
by Mr. Paolo Soprano
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Distinguished Ministers,

Dear Colleagues,

I am honoured to attend this special session focused on the role of education in promoting SD principles and aimed at enhancing and promoting inter-ministerial cooperation between the ministries of environment and those of education.

Education is a crucial tool to support sustainable development policies, since the success of these policies largely depends on actions taken to influence cultural models and consumption patterns. Italy has strongly supported the organisation of this high level special session and is convinced that, through the adoption of the joint ministerial statement, education will become one of the key issues of the "Environment for Europe" process representing a positive input to the whole ESD process in the UNECE region.

The adoption of the UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and the implementation process at the national level represents for Italy a strong commitment towards the fulfilment of the objectives identified in the Implementation Scheme of the UN Decade on ESD (2005-2014). Italy has launched a process involving main institutions and relevant stakeholders working in the field of environmental education to identify priorities and common objectives to be considered as key elements in the development of a national action plan on ESD; furthermore, financial resources have been allocated in the national budget law to further promote education for environment and sustainable development.

On February 2007 an agreement between State and Regions has renovated the allocation of funds for the National System for Environmental Information, Education and Training (INFEA), which represented since 2002

a best practice on environmental education, providing local capacity building and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the organisation of a National Forum on Education for the Environment and Sustainability, which took place in Turin (4-6 June, 2007) represented the occasion to set the scene and to establish a network of stakeholders involved in formal, non formal and informal education and to call all stakeholders and actors to commit themselves with concrete actions. During the Forum, the Undersecretary of State, Prof. Laura Marchetti, presented the document "Alfabeti Ecologici" ("Ecological Alphabets") as an initiative to enhance the debate on the introduction of environmental education in school curricula, through an agreement with the ministry of education.

Next Autumn 2008 Italy will organize the Second National Conference on Education for Environment and Sustainable Development that will represent an important opportunity to assess the status of initiatives, to define political priorities in a future perspective and to identify duties and responsibilities to be shared among relevant institutions and stakeholders.

The launch of an international Task force on Education for Sustainable Consumption in the framework of the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns reaffirms the Italian commitment to promote education, also at the international level, as an essential mean of implementation and as an accompanying measure to specific sectoral policies.

The Task Force has the primary aim to support countries in the introduction of SCP principles in formal learning processes. To this extent, a detailed plan of work for the period 2007-2009 has been developed to highlight the main activities.

Finally, we are called upon to commit ourselves to translate our intentions into actions, facilitating the involvement of other countries also beyond the UNECE region.

Thank you.