

Mr. Slobodan Backovic
Minister of Science and Education, Montenegro

On behalf of the ministers of environment and education of SEE¹ I would like to commend the work of the UNECE, the members of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Steering Committee on ESD, the Bureau and the Expert Group on Indicators, towards the implementation of the Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development. In particular, the countries wish to state their continued efforts towards full implementation of the Strategy.

As the South Eastern European (SEE) region is one of those sub-regions that have been highlighted within the Strategy for particular attention the SEE countries have come together to prepare and present a common joint statement on education for sustainable development (ESD). With this intervention Montenegro wishes to present the key messages of that joint statement, though with particular reference to the ways forward we foresee for the SEE sub-region.

The six objectives that support the overall aim of the Strategy underline the actions that are need to be carried out in order to develop ESD in our countries. Within the SEE region a number of initiatives have been undertaken to reach these objectives, yet there are also challenges and obstacles to full implementation of the Strategy. Within our Joint Statement we have highlighted the progress made and challenges experienced.

However, we consider that there is a shortfall in international support and action for the development of a comprehensive SEE sub-regional process. As such the sub-regional co-operation foreseen by the Strategy has yet to really develop. In light of this the countries of SEE jointly call for assistance in an enhanced process or programme of support, driven for and by the countries themselves. Such a programme for SEE could have the following main activities and aims as elements of any support programme for the sub-region:

- 1) Capacity Building for National Level Government Officials,
- 2) Forums for ESD,
- 3) Action Planning,
- 4) Curricula & Materials Development,
- 5) Competence development,
- 6) Research,
- 7) International/sub-regional coordination and contacts,
- 8) Donor support.

¹ Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

The interdisciplinary character and approach of the ESD Strategy is important towards addressing - in the educational setting - the environmental, social, economic, safety and security concerns that SEE societies face today. On behalf of the SEE ministers, I pledge our continued efforts to implement the ESD Strategy, yet call for assistance in building the SEE sub-regional process we have highlighted.