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Let me express our gratitude to Serbia for hosting this important conference, which offers an abundance of opportunities to discuss our common future.

It is also a pleasure for me to take part at this joint session on education for sustainable development – ESD - with so many significant presentations.

We see and experience changes in the climate, at an unexpected rate, caused by human activities. We need to change our patterns of consumption, especially for those of us who live in the most developed part of the world. Politicians must have the courage and sufficient backing also to make unpopular decisions. ESD as such is a key factor in order to pave the way for necessary changes in both individual and political behaviour.

In Norway, environmental education has gradually converged towards the principles for ESD. This is partly mirrored in our new curriculum guidelines, but not as thoroughly as it should. Further more, today's initial teacher training does not offer ESD as part of teacher education. We therefore need to seek compensating ways of enhancing ESD in education.

On the other hand, ESD is supported by pedagogical Internet-based resources; pupils and teachers at large take part in relevant activities and parents are supportive. Environmental activities are well supported by media, and NGOs play an important role as a resource and partner.

ESD requires access to relevant and good quality tools and materials. Developing these are both time consuming and costly. There is also a need for better cooperation, both nationally and internationally in order to obtain products of better quality and to save resources. Special foci should be on the issue of developing materials that are in accordance with the curriculum.

A well-functioning cooperation for the implementation of the UNECE Strategy for ESD is imperative.

We will therefore review the organisation of the National Committee for the UN Decade in order to make this a better tool for bringing the stakeholders together, for enhanced cooperation nationally and internationally, and for making the UN Decade more visible.

We want an educational system that provides all learners with knowledge and skills related to sustainable development, so that they will be able to assess and act with due consideration to sustainable development.

In order to achieve this, we need to provide educators with sufficient background on ESD.

Active teachers need to be able to build and update their qualifications through adapted in-service training.

Special emphasis will be given to initial teacher training. In the near future, we are to design a new teacher education. An important challenge then will be to ensure that ESD is integrated in a constructive and mutually beneficial way in their education.