



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UNESCO Office in Venice
UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (BRESCE)
Office of the Director/CCIT

**LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND
THE WAY FORWARD**

Joint session of Environment and Education Ministers

**Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”
Belgrade, Republic of Serbia - 10 October 2007**

Dear Ministers, Distinguished Guests and Colleagues,

On behalf of Mr Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, I am honoured to represent UNESCO during the Sixth Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” – in Belgrade and to open the Joint session of Environment and Education Ministers. This is a unique event, since it brings together Ministers from both the environmental and educational sectors, with the aim to reach a joint decision on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

In December 2002 the United Nations General Conference adopted a Resolution declaring the period 2005 – 2014 as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The overall goal of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is to integrate the values inherent to sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behaviour that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all. At the global level UNESCO has played a leading role in order to catalyse, coordinate and lend support the international community and to this global process. At the agency level UNESCO, contributes to the decade through its fields of competence, mainly in education, capacity building in sciences, culture and communication, through knowledge transfer from science to decision

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makers and public, using modern communication and information tools, and by respecting the ethical standards in all of its activities.

The vision of the DESD is of a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviour and lifestyle necessary for sustainable development. Therefore, all the efforts made during the Decennium should focus on a world wide strategy of cooperative learning processes involving the whole of society. In order launch such a process, a number of advisory and coordination mechanisms have been established in order to facilitate UNESCO's leadership role. Since the international launch in 2005, the DESD has generated considerable enthusiasm and the response of member states supporting the Decade has been encouraging, since some of them have developed their own national strategies.

UNESCO has helped to catalyze and coordinate the efforts through global frameworks and mechanisms, providing a vision and engaging the international community and the network of UNESCO institutions, such as National Commissions and Committees, Institutes, UNESCO Chairs, UNESCO Associated Schools into the process. It is providing advice on regional and national planning, implementation and evaluation efforts. UNESCO has helped sensitize key decision-makers from ministries, business, NGOs and community organizations of the value-added of ESD for the future of civilization by building advocacy among and providing technical assistance to Member States. The awareness raising process requires different types of communication tools and activities. UNESCO therefore has prepared an action plan, a DESD website (www.unesco.org/education/desd), information and printed materials, and guidelines for national activities and is organizing conferences, workshops, training events and collecting good practise examples. With new incentives like contests, awards and joint school and community initiatives, UNESCO intends to accelerate the implementation process and to make Sustainable Development more popular and trendy.

UNESCO has established a series of new partnerships or joint actions with sister UN agencies such as, UNEP, UN Habitat and with

UNECE. Under the leadership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), a regional strategy was prepared, involving governments, international organizations, NGO's, the academic community and other stakeholders in a participatory process. A joint effort has to be undertaken in order to implement this strategy in UNECE region and to contribute to the Sustainable Development worldwide. It is hoped that this strategy will be shared and further discussed in the next days.

The DESD is a challenge for all and offers to countries and society the opportunity to rethink and reorient education, capacity building and awareness processes in order to imagine and devise local solutions to development problems and disparities. The importance and urgency of Sustainable Development in a global dimension could create the "snow ball" effect while consolidating the joint efforts of all agencies, institutions and countries. Through proactive and innovative awareness raising and advocacy, enhanced capacity building, targeted strategies, mobilization of key partners and financial resources such a process can be accelerated. UNESCO will ensure an effective monitoring and evaluation of the DESD in order to make results and impact visible.

UNESCO invites all state parties and agencies, from which a considerable number are here present in Belgrade to contribute to the implementation of the common strategy. Joint interaction between the environmental and educational ministries, is a desirable objective towards the elaboration of a joint decision on Education for Sustainable Development.

The achievements and the impact of the DESD depend upon a sincere commitment of all the decisions makers and involved stakeholders. Together we can face the challenge for sustainability, peace, welfare and prosperity for all and to share natural resources and protect the planet for the future generations.